ROBERT BURNS;

AS

A POET, AND AS A MAN.



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BY SAMUEL TYLER.

"I see her yet, the sonsie queen,
That lighted up my jingle,
Her witching smile, her pawky een,
That gar't my heart-strings tingle."

DUBLIN:
PUBLISHED BY JAMES M'GLASHAN,
21, D'OLIER STREET.

MDCCCXLIX.

PREFACE.

THERE is a spirit of romance in the heart of man, that is ever striving after something better than the realities of life. This spirit is allied to the noblest faculties of the soul, and, as it is native to the mind, must be gratified in some way. There must be a literature, in which it is embodied, in order, by its representations, to satisfy its cravings. It is this spirit which writes novels; and it is this spirit which reads them. And novel-reading is the literary bane of this age. It renders the mind superficial, and far worse, it renders the heart superficial. The representations of novels do not touch the deeper, and more solemn sympathies of the heart. Even in its highest form, the novel is an inferior species of literature. Easy in its narrative, interesting in its incidents, requiring no effort to fix the attention upon its rehearsals, it draws the mind off from the monotony of life, and pleases for the moment. But when the fictitious visions pass from before the eyes, there is nothing of permanent truth left, in either the mind or the heart. We pass into an apathy like that after a revel.

The same spirit which thus dissipates itself in novels, finds its truest and noblest gratification in poetry. And once let the heart be touched, by the high revelations of the sublime, the beautiful, the good, and the divine, which poetry makes known, and the meagre, the superficial, the less true representations of the novel, will lose their undue fascination. Poetry is the very highest form of literature. It is in fact the noblest, by far, of all the arts. Sculpture, painting, and music, all combined, are but a faint expression of the human soul, in comparison with poetry. So far above those of other men, are the thoughts and the diction of the poet, that in all ages he has been said to be inspired. A special gift of divinity has been thought to be vouchsafed to him. When God put the harp into the hand of David, he conferred greater glory, than when he put upon him the crown of royal power. We of this generation, are still under the spell of the harp, but the power of the crown is gone for ever. And old Homer! when will his power die? And the glory of Italy, is Dante. His great soul fills his country with celestial light. And there is Shakspeare! How England rises in glory at his name! The world is full of poetry. The heavens, the earth, and the sea, have each their poetry. And God has given to these men the power to interpret it; and blending it with the richness of their own souls, to shadow it forth to ordinary men. Philosophers and poets are sent into the world to teach and exalt duller minds. If it were not for these great teachers, the race of men would ever be barbarous. Strike out

of human history all the works of genius, and take away from human culture all their influence, and how humble would be every page. The philosopher forms the opinions of the world, the poet forms their sentiments. The one wields his prerogatives over the mind, the other over the heart. And what is the human heart? On one side is heaven, on the other is hell. Over this bright, and over this gloomy region the poet wields his prerogatives. It is with the heart in its joys, and in its sorrows, in its pride and in its humiliation, that the poet has to deal. It is no wonder then, that poets have always been the best beloved of a nation's great minds. His spell is upon the heart. In youth, when love kindles its first flame upon the altar of the heart, poetry breathes its soft breath upon it, and gives it a heavenly warmth. And it gives a fragrance and a beauty to every flower of joy that blooms in the happy vales of that early period, and paints in brightest hues of hope the horizon of the future. And it constantly whispers into the ear of youth all those little joys it likes to hear. It tells the heart its own secrets of love, better than it knows them itself. And this is what Robert Burns has done better than any poet. He has depicted the sentiments of the youthful heart, with a power truly divine. He realized in his own soul more fully than any other man, the ideal perfection of human love. And this selfish age should be taught this sweetest mystery of the heart. The necessities of life are so continually impressing men with the value of utilitarian considerations, that the heart loses its generous ten-

derness. From this sordid state of the affections, love is the best preservative: for when its youthful freshness has passed away in the heart's slow pulses, it is still the central flame that warms all the affections. If, therefore, I have succeeded in drawing attention to this peculiar feature of Burns's poetry, while I have given due consideration to the others, I have done what I designed to do, and deem it sufficient apology for having written another work on Burns, when so many abler minds have done so, but have not given so much prominence to this peculiar feature, which is so characteristic of the poet. And I have further endeavoured to defend Burns, as a man, from false opinions of him. It will be seen, that when he was about to die, he felt deep concern for his fame, not only as a poet, but as a man. He felt, at that moment, when the soul often realizes, in an extraordinary degree, all its worth, what Cicero has so beautifully described in his oration for the poet Archias. "Nor ought we," says Cicero, "to dissemble this truth, which cannot be concealed, but declare it openly: we are all influenced by the love of praise, and the greatest minds have the greatest passion for glory. The philosophers themselves prefix their names to those books which they write upon contempt of glory; by which they show that they are desirous of praise and fame, while they affect to despise them. For virtue desires no other reward, for her toils and dangers, but praise and glory: take but this away, and what is there left in this short, this scanty career of human life, that can tempt us to engage in so many

and so great labours? Surely, if the mind had no thought of futurity, if she confined all her views within those limits which bound our present existence, she would neither waste her strength on so great toils, no harass herself with so many cares and watchings, nor struggle so often for life itself; but there is a certain principle in the breast of every good man, which both day and night quickens him to the pursuit of glory, and puts him in mind that fame is not to be measured by the extent of his present life, but that it runs parallel with the line of posterity."

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BURNS AS A POET.

CHAPTER I.

THE THEORY OF THE BEAUTIFUL.

It has long since been heard, all over the civilized world, that there appeared in Scotland in the last half of the eighteenth century, a great poet, in the person of an Ayrshire ploughman, by the name of Robert Burns. And as illustrious as is Scotland in great men, there is not another, who has produced so deep an impression on the universal heart of his country, as this same Ayrshire ploughman. Of this extraordinary person, I propose to give some account. I will first speak of him as a poet, and then, as a man.

Before, however, I speak of him as a poet, I will propound my view of the theory of the Beautiful, in order that I may, thereby, be the better able to lay open the mystery of his fascination. For he was emphatically the poet of the Beautiful.

The world was evidently designed as the dwelling-place of a being who delights in scenes of beauty. For the Creator has taken as much care to make every thing beautiful, as he has to make every thing useful. Utility and beauty are worked into harmony everywhere. Beauty seems to stand midway between utility and holiness. It is the sympathy with beauty, which draws out the heart, and elevates it above considerations of self, and prepares it for aspirations after holiness. If there were nothing but utility impressed upon nature, man, bound down by considerations of self, would scarcely have aspirations beyond those of the brute. For he is not more distinguished from the brute, by his perception of the moral, than he is by his perception of the beautiful. Indeed, of all the

natural influences which sway the soul for good, there is none more potent than beauty. It was beauty in nature operating upon the susceptible Greek mind, that enabled it to catch the divine lineaments of the beautiful and embody them in art. And art, thus embodying the ideal beauty derived from nature, in turn re-acted upon the Greek mind itself, and elevated it above that of all ancient nations, and it has continued to this day to refine nations, by kindling in them the sympathy with the beautiful. The Greek mind never could have been what it was, but for the beauty of its language, its sculpture, and its architecture; for though these are all the product of the mind itself, yet they are all powerful instruments of improvement when they embody real beauty in their artistic forms. Independently then of our present purpose, it is certainly a matter of importance to unfold the theory of the beautiful, in order that we may thereby, the better understand how to combine its elements in

the artistic organizations of literature and the other arts.

It may perhaps be thought presumptuous, that I should try my unskilful hand upon the theory of the beautiful, after so many masters have failed to discover and set it forth: that I should hope to embrace ideal beauty in my arms, when she has rejected the solicitations of so many illustrious suitors: that I should attempt to raise the veil from off her face, when it has never been given to mortal man to view the glory of her countenance. I confess it all! But I have been so fascinated by her loveliness as it appears reflected in the works of nature, that my anxious heart has forced me to the attempt. I longed to know the theory of that fascination which breathes from the works of nature. To learn the origin of that spell, which always seemed to me so near akin to the great sympathy which binds together the hearts of man and woman. For, in walking amidst the beauties of nature, there is always the

image of a beautiful woman, associated in my imagination, with them all:—

> "I see her in the dewy flowers,
> I see her sweet and fair;
> I hear her in the tunefu' birds,
> I hear her charm the air."

This delightful mystery I shall now attempt to unveil.

And let me begin by asking a question. Why is it that man, and the brute animals, draw such different conclusions from their observations of the material world? The brutes have just as acute senses as he. They can see with as keen an eye, and hear with as accurate an ear. There is not a quality of matter which they cannot see, nor a quality of sound which they cannot hear. The difference results from the difference in their mental constitutions. All that man beholds in the material world which the brute does not see, is transferred there from the truths of his own spiritual nature. Man throws over the material world, the glories of his own soul. The

beautiful, no less than the moral, belongs to the soul of man.

This is the great truth, by which I shall endeavour to raise the veil of mystery, which hangs over the beauty of nature. I expect to show that the beauty which we behold in nature, is mirrored there from the radiations of our own spirits. That it is not the dull matter which warms the currents of feeling within our bosoms; but it is a halo of our own spiritual being lingering around these objects, and imparting to them a significance which they do not possess inherent in their own natures.

In order to give a precise notion of my theory of the beautiful, it will be necessary to give my view of the theory of the sublime.

My theory is, that the *sublimity* of the material world, is derived from associations with man and his spiritual characteristics; and that the *beauty* of the material world. is derived from associations with woman and her spiritual characteristics.

"For contemplation he, and valour formed,
For softness she, and sweet attractive grace."

The qualities of sublime objects are masculine: those of beautiful objects are feminine.

With these preliminary observations, I will now proceed to unfold the theory of the beautiful.

In the first place, I will define what I mean by the beautiful. Many writers make the beautiful to consist in whatever of external nature produces an agreeable impression within us; thus making the beautiful identical with the agreeable. But this is not the meaning that I shall attach to the word. These writers speak of the beauty of mechanical contrivances, the beauty of mathematical problems, and apply the term to other similar instances. But I exclude all such instances from my view of the subject. What I mean by the beautiful, is whatever, in the material world, produces impressions within us analogous to those awakened by our intercourse with woman. In fact, as I have already announced, I make woman the spiritual dispenser of beauty to the world. As the

fabled Prometheus brought down fire and fertility from heaven, to animate and fertilize the earth, so woman brought down beauty and love, to warm the heart of man, and make the flowers of bliss bloom along the streams of feeling, as they flow from their spontaneous fountains. But let me here distinctly announce, that I do not make the material objects to consist in mere accidental and arbitrary associations with woman, though these are a source of their beauty: but I make their beauty to consist in those associations which are founded on the analogies, or resemblances, that are felt to exist, between the qualities of certain physical objects and the characteristics of woman. For there are some material objects which possess a peculiar capability of being associated with the spiritual characteristics of woman. For instance, a rose-bush, blushing in the dews of a spring morning, will produce upon us an impression of such a nature, as to cause us to personify it as a female, and to speak of it, as the *blushing* rose; and to apply to

it other epithets, which have a real significance only when applied to woman. That the rose-bush in bloom has a peculiar fitness, an adaptiveness by its very constitution, to produce this impression, I cannot doubt. It is an adaptation between external physical nature, and the spiritual constitution of man. But yet, if woman had never been created, this impression could not have suggested to man her charms, and consequently, would not have had any thing like its present power over his heart. For it is undoubtedly to this suggestion, that it owes most of the influence which we term its beauty. And such is the case, with all other material things that are beautiful. They are suggestive of some tender sentiment; because they possess a peculiar fitness for being associated with the sentiment: on account of the fact, that they, of themselves, impress the mind with a vague feeling analogous to the sentiment. The principle of this impression may be thus explained. Suppose you hear a strain of melancholy

music, and you listen to the tune until it "untwist all the chains that tie the hidden soul of harmony." You may have no definite truth in your mind, producing the effects of sadness which you experience. It may be nothing but the luxury of feeling awakened purely by the accord of sweet sounds. So, if you look out on a soft moonlight scene, you will have impressions produced upon you very much like those produced by the music. A vague melancholy feeling will come over you. Now, in this case, as well as in that of the music, our souls are impressed by external material things acting on us through our senses, without the association of any sentiment. But then, we have so many sentiments akin to these states of feeling produced by the music and the moonlight, that they are readily suggested and associated with the music and the moonlight, giving to both a borrowed power. And just so it is with every beautiful object in nature. They all possess a power inherent in their constitutions, to produce in us a

vague feeling of sweetness that hangs about the heart, until sentiments analogous to the feeling are suggested, and become associated with the objects giving them their own significance,—imparting to them their own beauty.

Now, all these sentiments, which are thus associated with beautiful objects, and which these objects have a natural fitness for expressing, are those which woman is specially formed for awakening; and all these objects are therefore associated with woman, borrowing her beauty. This truth I will now proceed to prove and illustrate.

Let us look for our proofs and illustrations, into that great mirror, where all the beautiful objects of nature are reflected in the exact impressions which they make upon the heart of man: I mean poetry. For, it is in its descriptions, that we can see in what way beautiful objects affect the mind of man. And its descriptions embrace everything in nature that has a winning grace, from the beauty of the morning down to the loneliest flower meekly blush-

ing in the dewy light. This is the true mode of examining the subject which experimental philosophy points out.

How then, have poets described the morning, that most beautiful period of the day? Milton says,—

> "Now morn, her rosy steps in the Eastern clime,
> Advancing, sow'd the earth with orient pearls."

And again,

> "Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,
> With charms of earliest birds."

In both these descriptions, the chief beauty consists in personifying the morning as a woman. In no other way could that period of the day be set forth with such exquisite effect. And it is not the mighty genius of Milton alone that has thrown over morning the beauty of woman. Thomson has said,

> "The meek-eyed morn appears, mother of dews."

In what other form could poetry give charms to its description of morning? If there were any other more fascinating form, the graphic genius of Shakspeare

would reveal it, from the rich abundance of his vast resources. But in his highest and divinest imaginings, he clothes morning in conceptions of beauty borrowed from the charms of woman:—

> "But look, the morn in russet mantle clad,
> Walks o'er the dew of yon high Eastern hill."

And again,

> "Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day,
> Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops."

These touching beautiful descriptions of morning are its highest ideal possible in poetry. Genius can never accomplish any thing beyond them. Homer employed the same form of description:—

> "Aurora now, fair daughter of the dawn,
> Sprinkled with rosy light the dewy lawn."

And how do poets describe the most beautiful of the seasons? Thomson says,—

> "Come, gentle spring, ethereal mildness come,
> And form the bosom of yon dropping cloud,
> While music wakes around, veil'd in a shower
> Of shadowing roses, on our plains descend."

This description of spring seems borrowed from Dante's description, in the thirtieth canto of "Purgatory," of his beloved Beatrice descending from heaven to lead him to "Paradise."

"————— thus in a cloud
Of flowers, that from those hands angelic rose,
And down within and outside of the car,
Fell showering, in white veil with olive wreath'd
A virgin in my view appear'd, beneath
Green mantle, rob'd in hue of living flame:
And o'er my spirit, that so long a time,
Had from her presence felt no shudd'ring dread,
Albeit, mine dyes discern'd her not, there mov'd
A hidden virtue from her, at whose touch
The power of ancient love was strong within me."

Thomson has in fact borrowed the charms of Beatrice to beautify the spring. But even if the description be original with Thomson, it equally illustrates my theory of the beautiful. For Thomson has described spring just as Dante did Beatrice. And thus the beauty of Beatrice lives in this description by Thomson. The peculiar beauty of the description is a radiance left by her lovely person and spirit on this

earth, whose horizon she appeared in just long enough to captivate the great soul of Dante, and awaken within him the intuitions of beauty and the passion of love, and like a meteor to pass away.

Thomson again says of spring,

"While from his ardent look, the burning spring
Averts her blushful look."

And Burns in his elegy on Thomson, thus speaks of spring:—

"While virgin Spring, by Eden's flood,
Unfolds her tender mantle green,
Or pranks the sod, in frolic mood,
Or tunes Æolian strains between."

And on another occasion, Burns says,

"Now rosy May comes in with flowers,
To deck her gay, green-spreading bowers."

And every poet, when he wishes to present spring in its highest beauty, clothes it with the charms of woman. Spenser says,

"Then came fair May, the fairest maid on ground,
Deck'd all with dainties of her season's pride,
And throwing flowers out of her lap around."

And the moon, as she walks forth in her mild beauty, is always described by poets as a woman. Shakspeare says,

"Where Phœbe doth behold
Her silver visage in the wat'ry glass,
Decking with liquid pearls the bladed grass."

And Milton says,

——————"till the moon,
Rising in clouded majesty, at length,
————unveil'd her peerless light,
And o'er the world her silver mantle threw."

And he says, again,

"To behold the wandering moon,
Riding near her highest noon,
Like one that has been led astray,
Through the heaven's wide pathless way.
And oft as if her head she bow'd,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud."

And Burns, speaking of the moon, says,

"Now Phœbe in her midnight reign,
Dark muffled, view'd the dewy plain."

And when we look at the descriptions by poets of the flowers that smile so modestly amidst the glories of nature, we find them

weaving around them associations borrowed from woman. Priòr thus speaks of the cowslip:—

"The cowslip smiles, in brighter yellow drest,
Than that which veils the nubile virgin's breast."

Read Burns's Address to a Mountain Daisy, and see how the associations with woman cluster in the sentiments:

"Wee, modest crimson-tipped flow'r,
Thou's met me in an evil hour;
For I maun crush amang the stoure
Thy tender stem;

* * * *

"Thou in thy scanty mantle clad,
Thy snawy bosom sunward spread,
Thou lifts thy unassuming head,
In humble guise:
But now the *share* uptears thy bed,
And low thou lies!

"Such is the fate of artless maid,
Sweet *flow'ret* of the rural shade!
By love's simplicity betray'd,
And guileless trust,
Till she, like thee, all soil'd is laid
Low i' th' dust."

Take out of this poem the sentiments

and associations of woman that are interwoven in it, and you take away all its beauty. And how beautifully are the associations between flowers and woman exemplified in this song by Burns.

"Adown winding Nith, I did wander,
  To mark the sweet flowers as they spring;
Adown winding Nith I did wander,
  Of Phillis to muse and to sing.

The daisy amus'd my fond fancy,
  So artless, so simple, so wild;
Thou emblem, said I, o' my Phillis,
  For she is simplicity's child.

The rose-bud's the blush o' my charmer,
  Her sweet balmy lip when 'tis prest:
How fair and how pure is the lily,
  But fairer and purer her breast!

Yon knot of gay flowers in the arbour,
  They ne'er wi' my Phillis can vie:
Her breath is the breath o' the woodbine,
  Its dewdrop o' diamond, her eye.

Her voice is the song of the morning,
  That wakes thro' the green-spreading grove,
When Phœbus peeps over the mountains,
  On music, and pleasure, and love.

But beauty, how frail and how fleeting,
The bloom of a fine summer's day!
While worth, in the mind o' my Phillis,
Will flourish without a decay."

But why need I multiply examples, when the reader's memory can furnish him with a thousand instances where poets have personified beautiful objects as woman? It has been done in all ages, all countries, and in all literatures. Because the same analogies on which the personifications are founded, have been visible to the eye of the poet in all ages, and the mind, by the necessary laws of association, clothes the objects in the beauty of woman.

But it is not only in the actual personifications, that the association of material objects with the beauty of woman is indicated. The whole language of poetry indicates the same fact. The golden thread of woman's beauty is interwoven through all its richest diction. The choicest epithets are instinct with the lovely characteristics of her soul. Her

modesty, her innocence, her blushes of purity, her delicacy of sentiment, and her other charms, all breathe in the epithets applied to the flowers of the field. The *modest* violet, the *innocent* lily, the *blushing* rose, the *delicate* myrtle, are all inspired by woman's winning sentiments. And even the rich gems of diamond, and topaz, and jasper, and pearl, that hang in costly lustre around her person, derive their beauty from her charms, as the epithets applied to their qualities, clearly show. Indeed, look where we may, throughout that panoramic view of nature's beauties which poetry presents, and we see a halo of woman's beauty hanging around them all, giving to them their power of sympathy over the human heart. The epithets applied to them are the expression of what the poet's heart feels; and what he feels, are the sentiments which the peculiar graces of woman are especially designed to awaken. There is a mysterious analogy, as I have already shown, between these material objects and the qualities of wo-

man; and they are therefore bound together in the linked sweetness of association. It is in fact, upon these delicate analogies between animate and inanimate things, between the beautiful things of the material world, and the person and soul of woman, that those winning similes are founded, which give such ravishing power to poetry. Call to mind, for instance, the lines addressed by Burns to Miss Cruikshank:—

"Beauteous rose-bud, young and gay,
Blooming on thy early May,
Never may'st thou, lovely flower,
Chilly shrink in sleety shower!
Never Boreas' hoary path,
Never Eurus' pois'nous breath,
Never baleful stellar lights
Taint thee with untimely blights!
Never, never reptile thief
Riot on thy virgin leaf!
Nor even Sol too fiercely view
Thy bosom blushing still with dew!

May'st thou long, sweet crimson gem,
Richly deck thy native stem;
Till some ev'ning, sober, calm,
Dropping dews, and breathing balm,

While all around the woodland rings,
And every bird thy requiem sings,
Thou amid the dirgeful sound,
Shed thy dying honours round,
And resign to parent earth,
The loveliest form she e'er gave birth."

In this beautiful allegory, how the delicate analogies between a young girl and a rose-bud are seized upon, by those intuitions of the poet, which enable him to read in nature the most delicate expressions of hidden sentiments, and are woven together with the thread of associations into a master-piece of poetic fancy! And how all the evils of life which beset the path of a young girl, are likened, through the analogies which a poet sees, to the winds, the un-timely blights, the reptiles and other things which destroy flowers, and all accommo-dated by the plastic power of genius to the personification of the young girl as a rose-bud! And with what a stróng meaning do the analogies sustain the allegory to the end! Now, it was Miss Cruikshank who awakened in the soul of Burns, that inspir-

ation which called up all the analogies of this poem. Kindling his soul into poetic ardour, his fancy filled with her youth and beauty, he associates her with the rose-bud; and though a superficial reader may at first think it is the rose-bud giving charms to the young girl, yet it is manifest, that it is she who gives her charms to the mere sign and emblem of her youth and beauty. And whoever is peculiarly susceptible to the beauty of woman, is also peculiarly susceptible to those things in nature, which produce impressions analogous to the sentiments awakened by the beauty of woman, and which lead us to associate these sentiments with those things, and to personify them. And such was Burns. Indeed, Burns saw in nature so many poetic analogies suggestive of woman, and borrowing by association her charms, that he has uttered as a poetic conceit, the truth which I am now propounding, as a great æsthetical doctrine;

"But woman, nature's darling child,
There all her charms she does compile!"

And it was the exquisitely delicate intuition by which he saw these poetic analogies, that constituted the faculty by which he wrought the witchery of the spell, that he has thrown over the hearts of men, binding them in the blissful sympathy with the beautiful. This is the mysterious secret of his power. This, the divine rod by which he smites the stoniest hearts and makes waters of sweetness flow out. In fact, it was woman who was his inspiring muse. The first poetic impulse ever felt within him, was awakened by a young girl, his partner in the harvest field. In speaking of it, he says,—

"But still the elements o' sang
In formless jumble, right an' wrang,
Wild floated in my brain;
Till on that hairst I said before,
My partner in the merry core,
She roused the forming strain:
I see her yet, the sonsie quean,
That lighted up my jingle,
Her witching smile, her pawky een,
That gart my heart-strings tingle."

And in a letter to George Thomson, enclos-

ing a song for publication, he says, "I assure you that to my lovely young friend, you are indebted for many of my best songs. Do you think that the sober, gin-horse routine of existence, could inspire a man with life, and love, and joy—could fire him with enthusiasm, or melt him with pathos equal to the genius of your book? No! no! Whenever I want to be more than ordinary in song—to be in some degree equal to your diviner airs—do you imagine I fast and pray for the celestial emanation? *Tout au contraire!* I have a glorious recipe—the very one that, for his own use, was invented by the god of healing and poetry, when first he piped to the flocks of Admetus. I put myself in a regimen of admiring a fine woman, and in proportion to the adorability of her charms, in proportion you are delighted with my verses. The lightning of her eye is the godhead of Parnassus, and the witchery of her smile, the divinity of Helicon." This hasty and facetious effusion of the moment

is, in reality, the revelation of the true secret of Burns' poetic power.

But let me not, amidst the variety of my proofs and illustrations, lose the thread of my theory. It is not the mere form of woman that inspires us, any more than it is the mere form of other objects which impress us with beauty. For as captivating as is the external form of woman, with all its refined and traceable fitnesses, still how infinitely less glorious is it than the soul within, which wooes, and wins, and fills, and purifies, and hallows, and exalts the heart of man, until bound in a spell of bliss so ineffable, he feels that the winning graces which come so artlessly from the purity of the female heart, are a holy witchery bestowed by the Creator, for the very purpose of holding him fast in the ennobling thrall. But the female form itself is only the language of the soul, the medium through which it communicates its thoughts, its feelings, its emotions, its love; for every part of the form breathes forth expression. Even

the foot has its expression, and its tale of sentiment to tell. The heart is the sculptor of both the face and the form, moving and moulding it with its every emotion; and the changes that are wrought out in the ever-varying sculpture, are adapted by the Creator to express the various emotions of the heart, through all the fluctuations of sentiment and thought.

This, then, is the great truth which lies at the foundation of the theory of the beautiful: *The beauty of every object in the material world is the expression of some feminine sentiment.* The rose has expression, the lily has expression, the violet has expression, the myrtle has expression, and so has every object in nature. They have no soul moving within them, it is true. Neither has the sculptured marble a soul within it; yet it breathes forth the beauty of the Venus de Medici, and the Greek Slave. Neither has the lifeless corpse a soul stirring within it, yet no one will deny that it has expression:—

"Who hath bent him o'er the dead,
Ere the first day of death is fled,
Before decay's effacing fingers
Have swept the lines where beauty lingers,
And mark'd the mild angelic air,
The rapture of repose that's there,
The fix'd, yet tender traits that streak
The languor of the placid cheek,
And—but for that sad shrouded eye,
That fires not, wins not, weeps not now,
And but for that chill changless brow,
Where cold obstruction's apathy,
Appals the gazing mourner's heart,
As if to him, it could impart
The doom he dreads, yet dwells upon:
Yes, but for these, and these alone,
Some moments, ay, one treacherous hour,
He still might doubt the tyrant's power;
So fair, so calm, so softly seal'd,
The first, last look, by death reveal'd."

There is connected with each passion a material machinery subservient to its expression; and this machinery, even when at rest, speaks to our sympathies. It is this mysterious adaptiveness of matter moulded into form, to express the various manifestations of woman's spirit, that constitutes the

beauty of material objects. It is the sentiment expressed by them with which we sympathize. For spirit can sympathize only with spirit. To a thing that expresses nothing, the heart must of necessity be indifferent. There is nothing in it for the heart either to speak to or to respond to. And consequently, there can be no sympathy between them.

From the theory of the beautiful, which I have attempted to expound, I will now deduce a rule of criticism that will be of service to us when we come to examine the poetry of Burns.

If the beauty of material objects, as I have endeavoured to show, consists in associations by which they become the symbols of some sentiment of woman, then that must be the highest order of poetry, which expresses these sentiments with the least intervention of material imagery; for it is the naked sentiments which possess the power of affecting our souls, and the freer they are from all material clothing, the mightier is their spell

of sympathy over the heart. This is certainly so. And all the greatest poets, and Burns among the number, have possessed, in an extraordinary degree, the power of embodying their passions and sentiments in mere words, without the necessity of calling to mind material objects, with which the passions and sentiments are associated. It is, nevertheless, true, that material imagery is one of the most powerful means of poetic effect, and has therefore its necessary place in the true art of poetry. But the greatest poets and orators never give it the highest place in their poetry and their eloquence. Their most divine conceptions have been clothed in diction, as simple and as transparent as light. You never see about their work, that suffocating profusion of metaphor which second-rate minds throw around their productions. The nature of material imagery, it appears to me, has not been very accurately analyzed. The associations by which it produces its effect have been lost sight of by critics, and the material

imagery of its own inherent power, has been supposed to work the whole impression upon the soul. And therefore, the associations—the soul stirring within the material imagery—have been lost sight of in the principles of their criticism. And although it has ever been felt, that the poetry and the eloquence which expresses passions and sentiments directly and immediately in words, is of a higher order than that which expresses them by the intervention of material imagery, yet no reason founded in the nature of the human mind, and the theory of the impressions of external objects upon it, has heretofore been given for the effect. From the fact, that poets often employ material imagery to give vivid impressions of the emotions of the soul, critics have seemed to infer, that the material imagery, by its own inherent power, imparts, by the comparison, a greatness to the emotions described; and that the whole effect is produced in this way. But this is a fundamental error; for this very material imagery derives its

chief power, from being associated with the emotions which it is used to illustrate. For instance,

> "As in the bosom of the stream,
> The moonbeams play at dewy e'en,
> So trembling pure, was infant love
> Within the breast of bonnie Jean."

In this beautiful simile, which Burns has used to describe the first impulse of love in the youthful heart, we are apt to suppose, at first thought, that it is the moonbeam in the stream, which heightens, by its own inherent power alone, the beauty of the love in the breast of the maiden. But it is just the reverse. It was bonnie Jean who awakened, in the bosom of the poet, all the conceptions; and the pure love in her breast, he expressed by the beautiful imagery of a moonbeam in the bosom of a stream. But the image of a moonbeam in the bosom of a stream, derives its poetic power from the association; for its poetic beauty is not felt until we read on to the infant love in the breast of the maiden, to

which it is compared. Then, but not till then, the moonbeam in the bosom of the stream is clothed in magical beauty. The beauty of the infant love is transferred to it and consubstantiated with it, and the beautiful poetic analogy, which is felt to exist between them, exalts our idea of both. But it is the infant love, the associated sentiment, that is the soul of the picture, giving it its warmth and its fascination. This example affords a fair illustration of the nature of the effect of all material imagery upon the heart of man. It is the associated sentiments that give to the material imagery its poetic power, although the imagery is employed to illustrate the sentiments; for we never feel the full beauty of the imagery until the sentiments which it is intended to illustrate are revealed to our minds, and all the poetic analogies between the sentiments and the imagery are clearly seen. Then we take fire. Then we are wooed and won.

Another beautiful illustration of this point, just occurs to me, from Burns.

"As on the brier, the budding rose,
Still richer breathes, and fairer blows,
So in my tender bosom glows,
The love I bear my Willy."

It is the love growing in the tender bosom of the maiden that constitutes the soul of this picture, and impart its own warmth to "the budding rose, that richer breathes, and fairer blows." It is always the sentiment that gives to the imagery the life, the fragrance, the magic hues, in a word, the beauty that captivates our hearts.

I have, I hope, sufficiently laid open the theory of the beautiful, to enable us to enter upon the consideration of Burns as a poet. This we will do in the next chapter; and I think we shall see the theory which I have propounded, clearly exemplified. For, as I have said, Burns was emphatically the poet of the beautiful; and we may therefore expect to see him catching his inspiration from the source of beauty that I have unveiled, that we might behold the loveliness of her countenance, before we enter upon the examination of the poetry

of Burns, where merely her image is mirrored.

CHAPTER II.

If the rising superior to the difficulties of life, and accomplishing much under the greatest disadvantages, be an evidence of genius, then was Robert Burns a great poet. For no man was ever born in a more prosaic condition of life. Every thing near him, and every thing around him, was as dull as human life ever furnishes. Poor, and under the continual pressure of bodily toil, the present was always dreary; and when he looked to the future, the worst forebodings of coming evils could not but cast a hue of despondency over the path that lay before him. With no mental culture but what falls to the lot of the children of want all over Scotland, with no models of art but such as belong to the hovels of the poor, with no better standards

of the beautiful in thought and diction than the poetry of Allan Ramsay, with no examples of polite manners but those of an unlettered peasantry, his condition seemed to be the very one where thought and feeling must languish and expire. But the irrepressible energies of genius can conquer even these difficulties. The self-conscious spirit, developing and strengthening in the movements of its own irrepressible impulses, rises above the obscurity of its earthly condition, and catching a strain from that harp of eternal melodies which the ear of genius can always hear, quickens in its divinity, and is inspired to see ideal beauty in every province of nature, and in every condition of human life, and to depict in the divine words of song. But then there must have been something amidst this general dreariness, that tuned the heart of Burns aright, and awakened within him a sympathy of pleasure with reality, before the wings of fancy were lent him, to soar up to the region of the ideal, there to refresh and exalt his spirit at the fountains of absolute beauty

and absolute truth, and to bring down the dews upon his wings that were to beautify every thing in nature, upon which they might fall as he flew over the scenes of life. He has told us himself what this was. "You know (says he) our country custom of coupling a man and a woman together as partners in the labour of harvest. In my fifteenth autumn my partner was a bewitching creature, a year younger than myself. My scarcity of English denies me the power of doing her justice in that language; she was a *bonnie, sweet, sonsie lass.* In short, she altogether unwittingly to herself, initiated me in that delicious passion, which in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and bookworm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys, our sweetest blessing here below. How she caught the contagion I could not tell. You medical people talk much of infection from breathing the same air, the touch, &c., but I never expressly said I loved her. Indeed, I did not know myself why I liked so much to loiter behind with her, when returning in the evening

from our labours; why the tones of her voice made my heart-strings thrill like an Æolian harp; and particularly, why my pulse beat such a furious ratan when I looked and fingered over her little hands, to pick out the cruel nettle-stings and thistles. Among her other love-inspiring qualities, she sang sweetly; and it was a favourite reel to which I attempted giving an embodied vehicle in rhyme. I was not so presumptuous as to imagine that I could make verses like printed ones, composed by men who had Greek and Latin; but my girl sang a song which was said to be composed by a small country laird's son, on one of his father's maids, with whom he was in love; and I saw no reason why I might not rhyme as well as he; for excepting that he could smear sheep and cast peats, his father living on the moor lands, he had no more scholar craft than myself. *Thus with me began love and poetry.*"

This one passage of autobiography, lights up the mystery that hangs over the life of Burns. It was woman, the impersonation

of beauty, that first awakened within him a consciousness of his own powers, that first attuned his ear to hear the strains of the eternal harmonies that flow from the harp of nature. And now his heart begins to feel its own inborn riches. The fountains of its love are opened, and flow out over universal nature, making the bleakest provinces bloom in beauty. Nature's harp, and the harp of his soul, are attuned to one melody; and he is happy in the peace which an active obedience to one's condition always begets. His father's toil-worn family has now a radiance shed down upon it from the region of ideal truth; and he, seeing it in this light, dips his pencil in the colours of his heart, and presents the scene to the world in the beautiful picture of the "Cotter's Saturday Night." And the ideal light which now beamed in his eye, lent its beauty to every thing. The "Daisy" which is upturned by his ploughshare, is clothed in new beauty, and he sets forth that beauty, and the sympathies of his heart that are awakened by it, in words that will outlast

the Pyramids of Egypt. The "Mouse's Nest," which his ploughshare ruined, has also to his poetic vision the tenderest moral suggestions interwoven with its fate; and its fate becomes as eternal in history as the fate of Babylon. The sympathies of his heart go out towards all things around him.

"O, sweet are Coila's haughs an' woods,
When lintwhites chant amang the buds,
And jinkin' hares, in amorous whids,
Their loves enjoy,
While thro' the braes the cushat croods
With wailfu' cry!

"Ev'n winter bleak has charms to me,
When winds rave thro' the naked tree;
Or frosts on hills of Ochiltree
Are hoary gray:
Or blinding drifts wild-furious flee,
Dark'ning the day!

"O Nature! a' thy shows an' forms,
To feeling, pensive hearts hae charms!
Whether the summer kindly warms,
Wi' life an' light,
Or winter howls, in gusty storms
The lang, dark night!"

Burns's mission on earth seems to have

been to elevate the condition of the peasantry of Scotland. Not, however, like the political economist, by teaching some new mode of increasing the comforts of the body, but in elevating their spiritual natures, by throwing a spark of his own ethereal soul into their dull hearts, and kindling there the dormant energies. He spread a fancied beauty over all the realities of rural life. He showed the peasant that there was a pleasurable sympathy in his heart, to be awakened by every thing in his most laborious avocations; and thus made the most irksome duties a source of happiness. Burns lived and moved in the scenes of rural life. His own hands, and his own heart, had done and felt all that his poetry portrays. He idealizes realities. His rural scenes are real scenes. There is neither illusion, exaggeration, nor affectation about them. All are truthful life-sketches. He showed that there could be such a thing as love in a cottage, pure, holy love ; love elevated and akin to heaven. He showed that there could be happiness, and refined,

Christian happiness in a cottage. He seems like a spirit sent on earth, with a special power to kindle the sparks of sentiment that smoulder in the hearts of the simple dwellers in hovels, and to make them feel their kindred to divinity. And it was not one, or a few feelings of the heart that he awakened, but all and every one he electrified by the music of sentiment which had been infused into his own soul, by the God who made him the ennobling genius to raise out of its dull life the lowly peasantry of one of the most remarkable countries on earth. And when the higher circles of Scottish life heard the sweet strains of his lyre, coming up from the lowly scenes of the peasant's cottage, they turned their ears to catch the ravishing strains, and their hearts, kindling into sympathy, began to feel that all men are indeed of one great family. And thus the higher and the lower walks of life were drawn nearer to each other, and all orders of society brought into affiliation.

In showing what Burns did in this great

task which seems to have been assigned to his genius, the "Cotter's Saturday Night" may be taken as the groundwork. And was there ever a nobler picture of a real scene drawn? Did poetry and religion ever before shed such mingled beauty over so humble a scene? How many thousands of such scenes had before occurred in Scotland! But who had ever seen their real import? Not one human being. But when Burns poured the light of his genius over the scene,—when he sent his own being into all things animate and inanimate, when he personated the toil-worn cotter, and speaks from his own soul, such sentiments as a cotter should speak, and does what the cotter should do; when he personates every member of the cotter's family, and does and speaks for each, what his own soul inspires; when he lives in them all—the scene becomes magical, a high spiritual significance is given to it; and every peasant throughout Scotland feels the beauty of the life which he had before looked upon as a dull, toilsome reality. An ideal of pea-

sant life was thus set before a whole people, and set before them in such living reality, with such touches of nature, that every heart responded to its truthfulness, and every man and woman, and every youth and maiden, felt that in such a life, with such deeds, they could feel a happiness of a high order. They felt that such a life was fit for an immortal being, and a fit preparation for a state of higher existence. Let any one study well this admirable poem, let him look at it as a whole, and scan it in all its details, let him view every personage in the humble drama,—the old cotter himself returning from his work, his children running to meet him, his wife greeting him with a smile, "their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman grown, in youthful bloom, love sparkling in her e'e," then the joy of the whole family, as "the social hours swift winged unnoticed fleet," then the rap at the door, and a youth entering, and the "sparkle in Jenny's e'e, and the flush on her cheek," telling her anxious mother what his visit means; then the supper, then

the family worship, and finally, the retiring of all to rest: and let him dwell upon the admirable sentiments which pervade the whole, the beautiful proprieties which characterize every thing, the beauty of holiness which appears in the entire scene, and he may then estimate the influence which this fine work of art, so true to nature, has done in elevating the peasant life of Scotland. And the poet himself has conceived the poem in a national spirit, and connected it with the glory of his country. In the concluding stanzas he addresses himself to his country, and asks from Heaven a blessing on it, by preserving such purity in peasant life as he has just described. And finally, connecting his work with the deeds of Wallace, he feels that a patriot bard has the great duty to perform of promoting the glory of his country.

Burns, then, seizing upon the great element of social life, the family, and infusing into it the elevation and the purity of his own genius, and connecting it with the glory of his own country, shows that he felt

the full scope of the genius that was working within him to a great end. He laid the foundation of his whole work in the "Cotter's Saturday Night." Everything else he wrote may be considered as auxiliary to the purpose shadowed forth in that poem. For his other writings, taken as a whole, have the same tendency as the "Cotter's Saturday Night,"—to elevate the peasant life of Scotland. Let any one read his writings with this view of them, and he will see the truth of these remarks. What, for instance, do all his sweet lyrics illustrate, but something in rural life that can affect the heart? He does by his writings in a few years, what tradition does in ages—fills the scenes of his country with the creations of fancy. Everything, animate and inanimate, is beautified and endeared by associations thrown around them by his genius. The hills, the vales, the streams, the avocations of the peasant, are all rendered dear by some touching incident.—The peasant who has once read the address to the "Daisy," can never see one

again, without his heart awakening to sympathy with the fine sentiments of that poem; or the address to the "Mouse," or to the "Wounded Hare," without feeling the touches of nature making him conscious of his kindred to Robert Burns.— And who can read that exquisite picture of love in peasant life, which Burns has drawn of himself and Mary Campbell, in his "Highland Mary," and suppose that every Scottish youth has not had his heart awakened to a higher estimate of the holy sympathy by which the Creator binds together the hearts of man and woman? Such a scene had often occurred before in Scotland; lovers had met in some sequestered rural spot, and had parted to meet again, and death in the interval had laid one in the grave. But never before had a Robert Burns so met, and so parted, with a Mary Campbell. It remained for him to embody in words the sentiments of the lover's heart, and to depict and exhibit to the world, a real scene in rustic life, more simply touching, more pathetic, than the ima-

gination of the poet ever before conceived. It seems as though the bees of memory, going back over the scenes of the past, had sipped the honey-dew from each sweet little flower that bloomed in the vale of youth, and, coming back laden with the freight of love, had nestled in his heart. His whole soul is in the subject. Not content to celebrate his love for Mary Campbell on earth, his heart lingers after her in heaven; and, as if he had caught the strain from her angelic harp, he pours forth his feelings so winning sweet, so amiably tender, as to give to the world a new idea of the delicacy of human sentiment.

Never can a youth and a maiden walk together on the banks of the Ayr, without dwelling on the enchanting association of Robert Burns and Mary Campbell, who, like themselves, traversed its banks, and being ennobled by the contemplation. And as soon could the deeds of Wallace and of Bruce be erased from Scottish history, as this incident from Scottish literature. The Grampian hills could sooner perish,

than these beautiful monuments which Burns has erected to the memory of the being whom of all God's creatures, he loved most dearly. Mary Campbell was the muse who inspired his genius. It was her dear self that fully awakened in his heart its holiest sympathy, and made him feel that there was another heart, with which it was far sweeter to commune than with his own. And thus he was inspired to embody in verse the feelings of his soul in communion with the sweet creature, whom God had so formed as to awaken in his heart a pleasure dearer far than the heart itself. That love, pure, sincere love, was the ruling passion of Burns's heart, none can deny, who have studied his life and writings. And never did did a poet write so beautifully and so true to nature on the sacred theme. Remember the numerous lyrics in which the sentiment is embodied, and consider the earnestness and sincerity of them all. And what can exceed in beauty the love scene between the eldest daughter and her lover in

the "Cotter's Saturday Night!" And what noble sentiments are set forth on the enrapturing subject!

"O happy love! where love like this is found!
O heart-felt raptures!—bliss beyond compare!
I've paced much this weary, mortal round,
And sage experience bids me this declare,—
If Heaven a draught of heav'nly pleasure spare,—
One cordial in this melancholy vale,
'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair,
In other's arm, breathe out the tender tale,
Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the ev'ning gale."

The truth is, the chord in Burns's heart, which Mary Campbell touched, was so completely attuned to her image, that to his latest breath, the sweetest music of his soul was awakened by the memory of her. His spirit, rapt in the enthusiasm of love, was carried down on the long-lingering stream of sweet memories, through the blissful scenes of their youth. How could a noble heart like his, ever forget such a creature as she must have been, who inspired his heart to depict such a scene as that in

"Highland Mary," and to pour forth the exquisite strain of "Mary in Heaven!" His heart was so fashioned, as the hearts of men of high sentiment always are, as never to love fully but once. The ideal of perfect loveliness in the mind of Burns, was the image of Mary Campbell. It was her magic person and spirit that first fully awakened within him the sweetest of all human sentiments, as it is the most holy. And never did that sentiment vibrate along the chords of a heart, through which it diffused more exquisite pleasure. Though Burns addressed so many beautiful lyrics, to so many different females, when his writings are narrowly scanned, and the workings of his heart analyzed, it can be seen that they are but the rehearsal of strains which the sweet charms of Mary Campbell had first drawn forth from the lyre of his heart. Can it be imagined, for instance, that so beautiful, so exquisitely wrought, so artificially finished a little poem, as the address to Miss Cruikshank, would have been written on so

slight an occasion, if the simple, sweet little allegory had not been already written on the heart? Mary Campbell was in every pulse along his veins, in every roving fancy. "In poets and in painters, and perhaps in men who are neither the one nor the other, it is tolerably certain (says a writer) that the object of their first sincere attachment furnishes not a few of the elements which go to make up the character which continues through life, for them, the most attractive. Their ideal woman, however exalted and refined by their own further development, will continue to bear a sisterly resemblance to their first love. Who can fail to recognize, even in the most spiritual of Raphael's later creations, the fair-haired Madonnas of his earliest time. We may conceive the Madonna di San Sisto, as representing the glorified body of the 'Bella Giordiniere.' A more minute acquaintance with the early days of the prince of painters, would probably reveal to us the simple story of some yellow-haired daughter of Urbino, whom he had wooed on the breezy

heights of the Apennines, while yet he listened to the instructions, and sat at the feet of old Pietro Perugino, and whose recompense for many an hour of youthful bliss has been, that her image has been consecrated by the hands of her lover, and for ever entwined with the highest conceptions which men in after times were to form of sacred beauty. In the other great painters, it seems to us that we can trace something analogous, — the delicately sensual air which characterizes the whole of Corregio's women,—the sunny glow of wanton life and joy which warms those of Titian,—and the mild and saint-like spirit which is shed over Murillo's virgins, seem to mark them out as three distinct families of beautiful sisters, in each of whom we can trace the resemblance to some common parent. They have each, in short, what is called a *type*, the origin of which may be that which we have suggested." Dante, the great Italian poet, was swayed equally with Burns, by this master passion. He never loved but one

only being. When in his ninth year he saw, on a festive May-day, under a laurel tree, Beatrice, a Florentine maid in the middle rank of life, of extraordinary beauty and attraction, his poetic heart heaved within him, and revealed a delicious sentiment, of which he knew not before he possessed the hidden treasure. The fountains of his heart were opened. Streams of bliss flowed through his delighted feelings. Beatrice became the muse of his inspiration. She died, and he married another. But his heart ever lingered after the lovely vision of ideal beauty, which he beheld in Beatrice. He was fired with the pride, with the glory, to have his name associated with hers in the eyes of men, and accordingly, he immortalized her in his "Divina Comedia." And so mysterious are the workings of the human heart, that it may be, that had not Beatrice captivated the soul of Dante, he would never have written his immortal poem. For such is the power of love over some minds, that all their ambition seems to be absorbed in it, and they

would build a pyramid for no other purpose than to inscribe their names with that of the loved one, to perpetuate the fact to future ages. Common minds cannot conceive the intense cravings of such a heart as Burns's and Dante's after a being in whom they beheld their ideal of female loveliness. The young man of poetic genius, longs after the society of some perfectly faultless woman,—the ideal of moral purity and physical beauty, upon whom to lavish the fullness of his love, and be made happy in sweet sympathy with such a being. But as no such ideal can be found in human nature, he selects from the fair daughters of earth, the one in whose charms he finds the greatest bliss, and the nearest approaches to that beatitude which hope craves and fancy pictures, and invests her with all the loveliness of the ideal one. And she stands forth, for ever after, the ideal model, for the loveliest creations of his fancy.

When we reflect, that love is the central tie of society, and the foundation of all

morals, it is at once seen how important it is, that it should be exhibited in all its purity, by those who form the sentiments and the tastes of a people. And never did a poet write so purely and so truthfully on this subject, as Burns. Every thought is a touch of nature, every expression the articulate beatings of his own heart. Let any study the poetry of Burns until he has completely realized the spirit of love which breathes in it, and then let him turn to the songs of Moore, and he will at once see in these, not sentiment, but sentimentality; not love as it warms and melts in a pure heart, but the gay gallantry of a heart that tries to feel, but cannot. The love of "Moore's Melodies" is the love of ancient time, the love of Anacreon;—a superficial, gay, pleasant, voluptuous feeling. The spirit of "Lalla Rookh," the love of the harem, vibrates along the chords of his lyre. And such was the sentiment of love, as exhibited in ancient literature. It was Christianity which first infused that pathos into the human heart, which gives to

modern love its exquisite sweetness. The same divine teachings which purify the other sentiments of the heart, shed their selectest influences on the tenderest of them all. How utterly gross and uninteresting are all the descriptions of nuptial rites and love scenes, as portrayed in ancient literature, in comparison with that glorious description by Milton, in the eighth book of "Paradise Lost," of Adam leading Eve to the nuptial bower, blushing like the morn. There is in it such a happy blending of the physical and the spiritual,—enough of the physical to make the blood run warm, and enough of the spiritual, to give to the feeling all the exquisiteness of high sentiment. There is such freedom of thought, and yet such chastity. Everything is fully revealed to the thought, and yet so happily concealed from the eye. Milton realized the truth first fully developed by the spirit of Christianity, that love is a spiritual sentiment grafted on a physical instinct. The physical instinct all feel; but the spiritual sentiment is felt, in all its ex-

quisite sweetness, only by the most delicately-fashioned minds. How blissful a realization of the sentiment Milton experienced, is seen in the joy which, in this description, is diffused over all nature, at the nuptial scene of our first parents.—Never did poet select objects from nature with such magical effect, to heighten our ideas of the bliss of an event, as he has, in this description. The very evening star is bid to haste upon his hill-top, to light the bridal lamp.

Although I have dwelt so long on this topic, I have not done with it. So much prominence has been given to it, not merely to illustrate the character of Burns, and to point out the source of his inspiration, but also for the purpose of showing, as I shall presently do, the influence which it has exerted, through the writings of Burns, on British literature and British morals. In order to do this, and at the same time to show the character of Burns as a poet, it will be necessary to take a retrospect of British literature—examine the spirit and

form of its first developement, see how it degenerated, and in what manner it is returning to its primitive type.

The first form of literature that appears in every nation is ballad poetry; and this consists of rapturous descriptions of the most striking objects of nature, and of the exploits and actions of men, that are at such a period of a people's progress, deemed most important. Such poetry is remarkable for its wild freedom, its naturalness, the boldness of its representations, the freshness and vividness of its colouring, and the facility with which the whole work seems to have been done. This poetry is always stamped with the peculiarities of the people among whom it originates. Everything that marks them as a peculiar people—their opinions, their sentiments, their pursuits, are all bodied forth in living forms, in this the first developement of their souls into literature. And in proportion as the peculiar spirit and form of this primitive literature is preserved in their subsequent literary productions, will be their power, their life,

and their originality. This truth is strikingly illustrated in the literature of ancient Greece. The spirit and the forms of her ballad poetry were embodied in the Iliad and Odyssey of Homer, with all the power which further developement could bestow. And thus all the fire and power of the primitive genius of Greece inspired Grecian literature through its whole course; for Homer continued to be the polar star of Greek literature, until the Greek mind, by foreign corruption, was incapable of appreciating masculine beauties. And where can be found a nobler literature? It embodied every excellence which it was possible to develope in the then state of the world.—How striking is the contrast between it and the literature of Rome. The ballad poetry of the Romans was extinguished by the flood of Greek literature—the Greek literature having come in upon the Romans, before their own literature had been sufficiently developed to drink into itself Greek culture, and assimilate it to its own distinctive type. The Romans, therefore, finding

it easier to borrow than to invent, became the imitators of Greek models, and produced nothing original, nothing purely Roman, in all their literature.

In the formation of modern literature, also, the primitive form of letters has been of more or less influence, according to circumstances. Hordes of barbarians with strong features of character, and possessed of ballad poetry and legends, corresponding with their character, came down in hostile inroad upon the countries cultivated by Greek and Roman literature, and crushed them beneath their rude feet. But they found themselves in the midst of a people more cultivated than themselves, and their own distinctive influence was less where the ancient culture was strongest, and greater where it was weakest. Accordingly, the Italian, of all modern literature, most resembles the ancient, and has less of the modern type. Indeed, it is chiefly to the new element which Christianity has given to modern literature that anything distinctive in Italian literature is to

be ascribed. In all else it is Roman. The element of the northern type of thought still, however, lives in its matter as well as in its language.

But as we advance to the north, from whence the distinctive element of modern literature came forth, we find that element more and more distinctly prominent. And of all the cultivated nations of modern Europe, the German and English have the most original language and literature, having been in their earlier periods less under the influence of Roman and Greek culture. Both these nations have preserved the spirit of their primitive literature, and developed all their letters according to their own distinctive types. And their literatures are thus emphatically national, the one German, the other English, and both modern.

But it is with English literature, that we are concerned. Our remarks upon all other literatures are designed merely to give distinctness to what we have to say about this. The primitive spirit and form

of this literature has been preserved. It is an original, a peculiar literature. It lives by its own life, it blossoms with its own bloom, and it bears its own fruit. It is emphatically English! The spirit, and sentiments, and forms of the ballad poetry and legends which came forth from the spontaneous impulses of the English mind, before its type had been modified, or its robustness cramped by foreign culture, were embodied by Spenser and developed into an enduring monument. And Shakspeare breathed the same air, and drank at the same fountains, and listened to the same music, and saw the same visions, and lived and acted under the same national impulses, through his whole literary labours. And Shakspeare is the English Homer, the polar star of English literature, leading the English mind in the right paths. And Milton, though cultivated by all ancient and all modern literature, has moulded all to the type of his own national genius. The primitive forms of English literature live in his glorious works. English opinions,

English sentiments, and English manners, are all in the entire literature of England during the time of which I am now speaking, down to the restoration of Charles the Second. The prose writers, as well as the poets, were all giants of one nation and one family. Spenser, Shakspeare, Bacon, Hooker, Raleigh, Taylor, Barrow, Napier, Milton, Cudworth, Hobbs, Locke, and others, were the men who built up the pyramids of English literature. Their works stand forth, vast, grand, and peculiar. Notwithstanding the great diversity of the subjects and the designs of these writers, they all have the same characteristics of great boldness, originality, force, and English peculiarity.

The civil wars which broke out in England, checked these noble developements of native genius; and the energies of the people were directed into different fields of exertion. For however much was done by the Puritans for religious freedom and civil liberty, during these troubled times, literature certainly declined under the withering

influence of religious and moral asceticism. But still the literature of the times was English in all its elements. But when the Restoration brought into the country a king and a court, who had, during their exile in France, imbibed the taste of that country, the barriers of English literary independence were entirely broken down. England then became a province of the great republic of European letters. And a French taste, called a classical taste, formed after ancient models, began to mould and fashion English letters. French dress, French manners, and French morals, all alike became the fashion, and spread from the court over the kingdom. The world ceased to be considered by Englishmen as a scene of sacred duties, important enterprises, and lofty views, as it had been through all their previous history. It was now considered a mere theatre of amusement. The deeper and solemn passions of the heart no longer swelled in English bosoms, awakened by lofty views of human destiny. A gay and heartless complacency

took the place of the grave dignity of former times, and showed that effeminacy had superseded the manliness and robust energy of English character. The most sacred ties of social life were looked upon as trifles; and intrigue and amours were considered as indispensable accomplishments of a fine gentleman. Ridicule and fun became the predominant sentiments, and the world was looked upon pretty much as Butler has presented it in Hudibras. Indeed, that poem might well be considered the grand epic of that age. All the literature was excessively immoral; for the world had become a comedy. Wycherly, Congreve, and the other comic dramatists, took an especial care to deride, by the most ridiculous exposures, that peculiar feature in English morality, faithfulness to the marriage tie.

But such extreme grossness soon began to decline. The deed, however, had been done. English manners had lost their sincerity, and English character its manliness. Everything was now more polished and

more heartless. The age of debauchery was passing away, and that of gallantry, independent of personal attachment, was coming on. And literature, which is always the expression of the character of the age, lost its ease, its majesty, it copiousness, and its originality. The harp of English poetry, with its deep pathos, and its exquisite sweetness, was no longer touched by the robust hand of national genius, but hung silent upon the Druidical oak. Everything had become foppish and exquisite. The sublime tone of the old poets, their rich and unrestrained fancy, and their luxurious negligence, were considered barbarous by this new school; and their tender and romantic sweetness in portraying the domestic feelings, were derided as childishness. In a word, most of what constituted the glory of the old literature was deemed unrefined, and inconsistent with the supposed necessary heartlessness of polished man. Satire, sophistry, artificial declamation, wit, and elaborate work-

manship, became the characteristics of the age. Dryden, Pope, Addison, and Swift, are the great names in this literature, with all its faults and all its excellencies. How few lines that are truly sublime, pathetic or tender, can be found throughout the wide extent of the cold domain which was cultivated with so much art. Bolingbroke, though steeped in all the immorality of the times, by the power of his genius, bore himself superior to the general literary style of the day. And his writings, though rotten at the heart, are grand and majestic in their broad and lofty trunk, and their luxuriant and wide-reaching branches. Soon after the age of Queen Anne, this literature began to lose its high reputation. Omens of a change in taste began to appear. Thomson, both in his style and in his topics, showed that the dawn of a better taste was opening. He was more natural and more homely. And Cowper approached nearer still to the old standards, by treating of subjects that touched the heart, in natural phrases and in natural images. Poetry

began to assume its proper vocation, of writing for the many and not for the few. It began again to weave its beauties around the universal realities of nature and of life.

In this state of British literature Burns appeared. Educated in no school, trammelled by no master, exulting in the magic of unrestrained genius, he caught his inspiration from nature herelf, and spoke as she bid him.

"I am nae poet, in a sense,
But just a rhymer, like by chance,
An' hae to learning nae pretence,
Yet, what the matter?
Whene'er my muse does on me glance,
I jingle at her.

Your critic-folk may cock their nose,
And say, 'How can you e'er propose,
You, wha ken hardly verse frae prose,
To mak a sang?'
But, by your leaves, my learned foes,
Ye're may-be wrang.

What's a' your jargon o' your schools,
Your Latin names for horns an' stools;

If honest nature made you fools,
What sairs your grammars?
Ye'd better ta'en up spades and shools,
Or knappin-hammers.

A set o' dull, conceited hashes,
Confuse their brains in college classes!
They gang in stirks, and come out asses,
Plain truth to speak;
An' syne they think to climb Parnassus,
By dint o' Greek!

Gie me a spark o' nature's fire!
That's a' the learning I desire;
Then, though I drudge thro' dub an' mire,
At pleugh or cart,
My muse, though hamely in attire,
May touch the heart."

Burns felt, that to touch the heart, was the great work of the poet; and that to do this, he must embody, in their greatest purity and their greatest strength, the feelings and the sentiments of the age, as they are connected with the manners and customs, and the natural scenes and the historic incidents of his country. This, no poet had done for Scotland.

"Nae poet thought it worth his while,
To set her name in measur'd style;
She lay like some unkenn'd-of isle,
Beside New-Holland,
Or whare, wild-meeting oceans boil
Besouth Magellan."

Burns resolved to rescue his country from this poetic oblivion: and never did a poet perform his task with more originality. For in the whole history of literature, no man ever appeared in the province of letters so little under the influence of the literary taste of his age. He was not more isolated from the fashionable circles of social life, by his humble birth, than he was from the literary taste of the age, by his peculiar mental culture, and his natural literary instincts. The literary taste of the age was severely cold. The poetry most in vogue, treated of topics as remote from all feeling and sentiment, and as little connected with nature and the present times, as if man had no heart, and the present was of no interest. Burns is all heart, all nature, and treats of no topic whatever but those that

are interwoven with the feelings and the sentiments, and connected with his country. Driven by the force of his genius over the social limits of his birth, towering on proud wing above the walls of criticism, he looked beyond, over the vast fields of various nature, and breathed into his soul a universal inspiration. Sweeping in his wide flights, and rejoicing in his strength, he took from the hand of nature her harp, and tuned the strings for himself. Full of love for nature, filled with the glory of his country, in love with all that is good and great in his country's history, in love too with the hills, the vales, the streams, with everything that appertains to Scotland, he was destined, by his genius, to be the national poet of his country. And this destiny he seems to have felt in early youth.

"Ev'n then, a wish (I mind its pow'r),
A wish, that to my latest hour,
Shall strongly heave my breast,—
That I for poor auld Scotland's sake,
Some usefu' plan or beuk could make,
Or sing a sang at least."

Burns consecrated the peasant's cottage as the temple of his fame. It was the hearts under this humble roof, whose feelings and sentiments he was to delineate. It was to throw the enchantment of ideal beauty over cottage scenes, and cottage joys and sorrows, that his muse was to sing. Palaces and courts were to give place to the cottage,—the heart-felt pleasures of the last were to be contrasted with the cold courtesies of the first. And hear him strike his

"* * * moorland harp,
Wi' gleesome touch!"

"The lav'rock shuns the palace gay,
And o'er the cottage sings;
For nature smiles as sweet, I ween,
To shepherds as to kings.

Let minstrels sweep the skilfu' string,
In lordly lighted ha';
The shepherd stops his simple reed,
Blithe, in the birken shaw.

The princely revel may survey
Our rustic dance wi' scorn;
But are their hearts as light as ours,
Beneath the milk-white thorn?

The shepherd, in the flow'ry glen,
  In shepherd's phrase will woo;
The courtier tells a finer tale,
  But is his heart as true?

These wild-wood flowers I've pu'd to deck
  That spotless breast o' thine;
The courtier's gems may witness love,
  But 'tis na love like mine."

It was by simple strains like this, that Burns brought back into poetry natural topics, healthful sentiments, and a manly morality. There could not be a greater contrast than there is between his poetry and that of the age preceeding him. His is all nature, that is all art. What he says of Allan Ramsay, is a perfect description of his own muse:—

"Thou paints auld nature to the nines,
In thy sweet Caledonian lines;
Nae gowden stream thro' myrtles twines,
          Where Philomel,
While nightly breezes sweep the vines,
          Her griefs will tell!

In gowany glens thy burnie strays,
Where bonie lasses bleach their claes;

Or trots by hazelly shaws and braes,
Wi' hawthorns gray,
Where blackbirds join the shepherd's lays
At close o' day.

Thy rural loves are nature's sel';
Nae bombast spates o' nonsense swell;
Nae snap conceits, but that sweet spell
O' witchin' love;
That charm that can the strongest quell,
The sternest move."

We have seen, that during the reign of Charles the Second, the sentiment of love had been degraded into a heartless gallantry; and that in the literature which sprung up during the reign of Queen Anne, a general heartlessness prevailed, betokening a state of society unfavourable to noble sentiment, and in marked contrast with that which characterized the old poets. Those poets were no less distinguished for the pure language of the affections, than for glowing descriptions of nature, and profound thought and lofty sentiments. With what divine diction, with what bewitching illustrations, with what romantic sweetness

of incident, is innocent love set forth in "Paradise Lost!" The very dews of love seem sprinkled over the descriptions! The spirit of an English fireside hovers over the domestic scenes of paradisiacal happiness. This is one of the chief glories of the poem; and, indeed, the domestic element is one of the chief glories of modern literature. This element was scarcely known to ancient literature. The seclusion in which woman was kept, took away from private life its elegant courtesies, and rendered the gaieties of social intercourse pretty much of a coarse debauch. It was Christianity, which in its general awakening of the deeper sympathies of our nature, first fully opened this finest source of emotion. Clothing woman in the beauty of holiness, it made her that impersonation of loveliness which she appears in modern literature. And in no poet does she appear so lovely as in Burns. No poet understood so well how to set forth "that sweet spell o' witchin' love." He therefore has brought back

into British literature that high estimate of woman, and of the joys of domestic life, which is as indispensable to a sound literature, as it is to good morals. His harp was heard throughout every rank of British society, renewing, by its natural strains, the tender feelings of the heart, that had grown callous under the cold discipline of polished man, ever prone to sacrifice the sentiment of love, in marriages of expediency. And with this sentiment of love, the great master-passion of the heart, he brought back into poetry all those topics of common, universal, and eternal sympathy, which had been banished by the later school of English poetry. And a naturalness was again given to literature. So homely a topic as an old farmer's new-year salutation to his old mare is celebratedin song. The farmer recounts their past lives, and enumerates the happy incidents, as though they were companions.

"That day, ye pranc'd in muckle pride,
When ye bure hame my bonnie bride;
An' sweet and gracefu' she did ride,
Wi' maiden air.

When thou an' I were young an' skeigh,
An' stable-meals at fairs were dreigh,
How thou wad prance, an' snore, an' skreigh,
'An tak the road!
Town's bodies ran, and stood abeigh,
An' ca't thee mad."

What could be more graphic? We see the picture with our material eyes. What is it that genius cannot adorn? And Burns celebrates so trivial a thing as a mouse's nest torn up by the share of his plough.

"Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!
Its silly wa's the win's are strewin;
An' naething, now, to big a new ane,
O' foggage green;
An' bleak December's winds ensuin',
Baith snell and keen!

That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble,
Has cost thee mony a weary nibble,
Now thou's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble,
But house or hald,
To thole the winter's sleety dribble,
An' cranreuch cauld!

But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
In proving foresight may be vain:

The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft a-gley,
An' lea'e us nought but grief and pain
For promised joy.

Still thou art blest, compar'd wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee;
But och! I backward cast my e'e
On prospects drear!
An' forward, tho' I canna see,
I guess an' fear!"

With what exquisite effect is this, so common an incident, wrought into a most tender and instructive lesson! There is a tenderness, mingled with a species of humour, that belongs only to the muse of Burns, interwoven with such delicate tact into the description! The same mingled tenderness and humour is admirably exhibited in the lament for the death of the pet sheep Mailie.

"Thro' a' the toun she trotted by him;
A lang half-mile she could descry him,
Wi' kindly bleat, when she did spy him,
She ran wi' speed:
A friend mair faithfu' ne'er cam nigh him,
Than Mailie dead.

I wat she was a sheep o' sense,
An' could behave hersel' wi' mense;
I'll say't, she never brak a fence,
Thro' thievish greed.
Our bardie lanely keeps the spence,
Sin' Mailie's dead.

Or, if he wanders up the howe,
Her living image in her yowe,
Comes bleating to him, owre the knowe,
For bits o' bread;
An' down the briny pearls rowe,
For Mailie dead."

Nothing can show more clearly than these instances, the poetic power of the commonest objects and incidents. What can be more touching, and at the same time highly poetic, than the living image of the sheep coming bleating to him for bits of bread! Poetic ambition overleaps itself when it attempts to vault beyond nature. There was, I believe, no feeling of lightness akin to humour in the heart of Burns while he depicted these scenes. It is their extreme childlike simplicity, that makes them awaken that state of feeling in our less simply-tender bosoms. We have not the

simplicity of heart to feel as Burns did when musing on such incidents. He became as a little child for the moment. "She was a sheep o' sense," though, to us, is ludicrous, would be seriously said by a child. And just so, I believe, it was for the moment of poetic feeling, to Burns. Critics have been puzzled to analyze this peculiar mingling of the tender and the humorous in Burns. Such I believe to be the true solution of the matter. Doubtless, after these pieces were written and the first impressions of the incidents wore away, Burns, in reading them, was impressed as we are, with a mingled tenderness and humour. The following song seems to me to illustrate, by its peculiar characteristics, the point under consideration. It is equally as tender, and quite as simple, as the poems which we have been considering, but it does not approach so near to the humorous. And we are enabled by it to see how gradually the simple may shade off into the humorous.

"Oh, stay, sweet warbling woodlark, stay,
Nor quit for me the trembling spray;

A hapless lover courts thy lay—
Thy soothing, fond complaining.

Again, again, that tender part,
That I may catch thy melting art;
For surely that wud touch her heart,
Wha kills me wi' disdaining.

Say, was thy little mate unkind,
And heard thee as the careless wind?
Oh, nocht but love and sorrow join'd,
Sic notes of love could wauken.

Thou tells o' never-ending care,
O' speechless grief, and dark despair;
For pity's sake, sweet bird, nae mair,
Or my poor heart is broken."

Now it is quite manifest in this beautiful little song, that it is nothing but the simple in it, which approximates to the humorous. And I can conceive that to some, it will appear to be really humorous. But it can never be so to one who can fully appreciate the simple and the tender. And the only reason why the address to the Mouse, and the lament for the pet Sheep, appears to approach nearer to the humorous than this song does, is that the simple

objects in them are not of the kind which are as nearly allied to the tender as those in this song. Let any one carefully compare them with a view to this point, and he will soon perceive the truth of these observations. And the following stanzas are equally as tender, and quite as simple, as any we have been considering, and yet I cannot conceive that they can appear, to any one, in the least degree humorous. And this shows that it is the element of the simple, in all this poetry, that produces the impression of the humorous, whenever such an impression is produced, and that this impression will be in proportion as the reader is incapable of appreciating the tender in conjunction with the simple. In a stormy winter's night the poet says :—

" List'ning the doors an' winnocks rattle,
I thought me on the ourie cattle,
Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle
O' winter war,
An' thro' the drift, deep-lairing sprattle,
Beneath a scar.

Ilk happing bird, wee, helpless thing,
That in the merry months o' spring,
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee?
Whare wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing,
An' close thy e'e?"

It was this capacity to appreciate the simple, one of the highest gifts of the artist, that enabled Burns to throw around rural objects and rural manners and customs, so much poetic beauty. And the delicate tenderness of his heart, no less than the richness of his genius, enabled him to associate and to blend, all the tenderest sentiments of the heart with animate and inanimate things. It was these attributes which qualified him to work out, with such witchery, his matchless songs, woven of the most exquisite material imagery and tenderest sentiment, into harmonious numbers.

"The little flow'ret's peaceful lot,
In yonder cliff that grows,
Which, save the linnet's flight, I wot,
Nae ruder visit knows,

Was mine ; till love had o'er me past,
  And blighted a' my bloom,
And now beneath the withering blast,
  My youth and joy consume.

The waken'd lavrock warbling springs,
  And climbs the early sky,
Winnowing blithe her dewy wings
  In morning's rosy eye ;
As little reck't I sorrow's power,
  Until the flow'ry snare
O' witching love, in luckless hour,
  Made me the thrall o' care."

Nothing could be more beautiful than the descriptions in the first four lines of each of these stanzas. They furnish fine examples of the power of material imagery in the poetic art. I know of nothing in all poetry more beautiful in the thought, and more delicately soft in the diction, than the two lines,

"Winnowing blithe her dewy wings,
  In morning's rosy eye."

But through all the songs of Burns, such exquisite passages can be found.

"White o'er the linns the burnie pours,
And rising, weets wi' misty showers
The birks of Aberfeldy."

A very remarkable thing about the poetry of Burns is, that throughout all its various phases it is intimately connected with the sober language of practical life. He brings down the muses themselves to have consideration for the affairs of men.

"Ye glaikit, gleesome, dainty damies,
Wha by Castalia's wimpling streamies,
Loup, sing, and lave your pretty limbies,
Ye ken, ye ken,
That strang necessity supreme is,
'Mang sons o' men.

To make a happy fireside clime
To weans and wife,
That's the true pathos and sublime
Of human life."

These beautiful fancies embody, in a very peculiar manner, the moral spirit of Burns's poetry. Being the sincerest of men, his real heart is poured forth in all his moods. If ever a man told the truth as it appeared

to him, Burns has told it in the last four lines of these stanzas. The true pathos and sublime with him were always connected with reality. And he has made the muses, Scottish dames, laving their pretty limbs in wimpling streams; for in truth the Scottish dames were his muses. And as creative as was his imagination, he never once desired to see any being more lovely than he had beheld in woman. For though he had swept over the whole region of fancy, and beheld the loveliest visions that ever lay in the enchanting vales of poetry, he has said of woman—

> "Not the poet, in the moment
> Fancy lightens in his e'e,
> Kens the pleasure, feels the rapture
> That thy presence gie's to me."

This is the most divine incense ever offered at the shrine of woman. There is nothing earthly about it. It is the highest conception of pure spiritual bliss.

But there are other subjects in rural life, besides those which we have been con-

templating, that constitute material for poetry. The traditions and superstitions of the country people, always furnish the poet a fine scope for the creations of genius. In Scotland there was an ancient festival called "Halloween," that was connected by the imagination of the people, with all those charms and spells by which a rude people pry into futurity. This festival is held on a night, when fairies, and other aerial beings, are supposed to be abroad in the world on their mysterious errands. Burns has celebrated this festival with the full power of his genius. His poem opens with a description of the fairies prancing on horses over hills and vales, and along streams by moonlight.

"Upon that night, when fairies light
  On Cassilis Downans dance,
Or owre the lays, in splendid blaze,
  On sprightly coursers prance;
Or for Colean the route is ta'en,
  Beneath the moon's pale beams;
There, up the cove, to stray an' rove
  Amang the rocks and streams,
    To sport that night.

Amang the bonnie, winding banks,
Where Doon rins, wimplin', clear,
Where Bruce ance rul'd the martial ranks,
An' shook his Carrick spear,
Some merry, friendly countra folks,
Together did convene,
To burn their nits, an' pou their stocks,
An' haud their Halloween,
Fu' blithe that night

The poet then describes, with wonderful skill, a number of superstitious ceremonies, by which the merry company try their fortunes. And he presents as merry a scene, heightened in interest by the mystery of the proceeding, as social life can ever exhibit. In the midst of the fascinating narrative, with that felicity of genius which so distinguishes Burns, he presents the most beautiful description of a rivulet running through its winding and various course, which one of the charms renders necessary for him to mention, that descriptive poetry can furnish. Indeed there is such a reality in the description, that we can not only see the rivulet, but all its motions, throughout

its various course, are distinctly before the eye.

"Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,
  As thro' the glen it wimpl't;
Whyles round a rocky scaur it strays;
  Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't;
Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,
  Wi' bickering, dancing dazzle;
Whyles cookit underneath the braes,
  Below the spreading hazel,
        Unseen that night.

How fruitful must be the genius that can, as it were, by mere playfulness, spread out so bewitching a description! For it is cast into as merry a country frolic, as the honest lads and bonnie lasses of Scotland ever witnessed. And the poor girl, who had gone out in the moonlight "to dip her left sash-sleeve" into this lovely stream, is so frightened by something that gets between her and the moon, that she plunges into the water. Burns has thus immortalized in song this ancient country festival, binding the hearts of Scotchmen to their country by a national literature. A literature, to be

healthful and enduring, and to reach the highest glory of art, must be the æsthetic expression of a people's spirit and manners. According to my notions of art, it is as proper for poetry to realize in its creations the truth of the times, as it is for history to do so. It is a higher order of poetry, which, springing out of our national sympathies, embodies the incidents in which we are born. It then springs out of nature, and has all her truth and beauty. Burns was doing a better work when he wrote "Halloween," than Dryden was, when he wrote "Alexander's Feast." The one is national, the other not. The poet who wishes to reach the highest glory of his divine art, and to live for ever, must be national. There are themes which are universal, such as Dante and Milton sung, but the poet who treats them, must give them the type they bear in his nation, and age. Byron, self-exiled; and maddened with a traitorous egotism, prostituted his great genius in treason to his national literature, by repudiating British themes, and singing of Italian and

Turkish subjects alien to the great heart of the noble Briton. And oh, when I have followed the erring poet from scene of falsehood to scene of frenzy, when I have seen the noble swan which God had sent into the world to swim in majesty on the pellucid lakes of truth, diving into the filthy waters of error, my heart has sunk sick within me, at the prostitution of so much genius. But Burns, bound to Scotland by every power of his great soul, in his poetry knew nothing but Scotland.

"Scotland!—dear to him was Scotland,
In her sons and in her daughters,
In her Highlands,—Lowlands,—Islands,
Regal woods, and rushing waters;—
In the glory of her story,
When her tartans fired the field!
Scotland! oft betray'd—beleaguer'd—
Scotland! never known to yield!
Dear to him her Doric language,
Thrill'd his heart-strings at her name—
And he left her more than rubies
In the riches of his fame."

And it was this very nationality of feeling which has made Burns immortal.

Burns shows his nationality, even in his representation of the Devil. He makes a Scottish devil of him. He is not the Satan of Milton. He is not the Mephistophiles of Goethe. He is altogether unique. It is true you recognize in him the roaring lion of the Scriptures.

> "Whyles, ranging like a roaring lion,
> For prey, a' holes an' corners tryin';
> Whyles on the strong-wing'd tempest flyin',
>   Tirlin the kirks:
> Whyles, in the human bosom pryin',
>   Unseen thou lurks."

There is a humorousness about this description, which, with all its terrific import, makes the personage described, another than the Satan of the Scriptures. It is the superstitions, with which the devil is associated by a great mystery in the creed of the vulgar, that have made Burns give a humorous vein to the delineation of his character.

> "I've heard my reverend grannie say,
> In lanely glens ye like to stray;

Or where auld ruin'd castles, gray,
Nod to the moon,
Ye fright the nightly wanderer's way,
Wi' eldritch croon.

When twilight did my grannie summon,
To say her prayers, douce, honest woman!
Aft yont the dyke she's heard you bummin',
Wi' eerie drone,
Or, rustlin, thro' the boortries comin',
Wi' heavy groan.

Ae dreary, windy, winter night,
The stars shot down wi' sklentin' light,
Wi' you, mysel, I gat a fright
Ayont the lough;
Ye, like a rash-bush, stood in sight,
Wi' waving sough."

And as he did not catch Burns that night, Burns persuades himself that he will be always able to give him the go-by.

"An' now, auld cloots, I ken ye're thinkin',
A certain bardie's rantin', drinkin',
Some luckless hour will send him linkin',
To your black pit;
But, faith! he'll turn a corner jinkin',
An' cheat you yet."

Gilbert Burns says of this poem by his

brother, "The curious idea of such an address was suggested to him, by running over in his mind, the many ludicrous accounts and representations we have from various quarters of this august personage." Burns never sought for a poetic theme but within the borders of Scotland. It is out of the materials there found, that he has reared all his remarkable fabrics. Out of the simple story of a Carrick farmer, who went to market at the Town of Ayr, and got drunk, and rode home after night through a terrible tempest, he has, by interweaving into the narrative, the superstitions of the country about the places on the road, made one of the most remarkable poems ever produced by man. Considering the short time in which it was composed, between breakfast and dinner, it appears to me to stand forth as a work without a parallel. I mean "Tam o' Shanter." Never were such various and discordant scenes presented by any poet, in such rapid transitions, and in so few words, and yet with such perfect delineation. The first four

lines give as graphic a picture of a town late in the evening on a market-day, as can be well imagined. And a picture, too, of a Scottish town. And who does not see, with his very eyes, Tam's wife Kate?

> "Gath'rin' her brows like gath'rin storm,
> Nursin' her wrath to keep it warm."

And the portrait of Tam is a living reality: "A bletherin', blusterin', drunken blellum." This is his wife Kate's opinion of him, which she proves by a rehearsal of his woful deeds. And the amiable partner of his bosom, had predicted to his face an awful doom for her honest Tam.

> "She prophesy'd that, late or soon,
> Thou wad be found deep drown'd in Doon!
> Or catch'd wi' warlocks i' the mirk,
> By Alloway's auld haunted kirk."

Here then we have the hero and heroine of the tale, living before us, as familiar as neighbours. And in fact they were so intended to be by Burns—to be real Scottish folks of the olden time; for the tale is a

tradition. Before the tale begins then, we make, as it were, acquaintances of Tam and his wife Kate.

"But to our tale:—Ae market night,
Tam had got planted unco right;
Fast by an ingle, bleezing finely,
Wi' reaming swats, that drank divinely;
An' at his elbow, Souter Johnny,
His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony;
Tam lo'ed him like a vera brither;
They had been fou' for weeks thegither!
The night drave on wi' sangs an' clatter;
An' aye the ale was growing better:
The landlady and Tam grew gracious;
Wi' favors secret, sweet, and precious:
The Souter tauld his queerest stories;
The landlord's laugh was ready chorus:
The storm without might rair and rustle,
Tam did na mind the storm a whistle."

Neither prose nor verse can furnish a more living picture of a merry little revel. Nothing could be sketched with more skill. Every incident is presented at the very time, and in the very manner, which is best calculated to give most reality to the scene.

"Wi' reaming swats, that drank divinely,
An' aye the ale was growing better."

Just look how happily these two lines are introduced, as to time and incidents!

"The landlord's laugh was ready chorus."

Could any thing be more skilful, than the way in which this line is thrown in? You have not heard any thing of there being a landlord, until at the proper moment, he is presented in the most enlivening manner possible to description. And in how few words is the whole scene sketched. This is the master-skill of description. Because you then see everything at once. Everything and every person are brought into unity and place. You see them together.

"Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,
O'er a' the ills o' life victorious!"

Such is the happy state of Tam o' Shanter as the poet presents him in the first scene.

"But pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed!

Or like the snowfall in the river,
A moment white,—then melts for ever;
Or like the borealis race,
That flit ere you can point their place;
Or like the rainbow's lovely form,
Evanishing amid the storm."

Were there ever such beautiful reflections upon such a scene? And think of the suddenness of the transition of the poet's mind, from sketching the scene, and then calling up such exquisite imagery to illustrate a moral truth which the scene and what was to follow, suggested to him. And what follows requires just as entire a shifting of the whole mood of the mind again.

"Nae man can tether time or tide;—
The hour approaches, Tam maun ride;
That hour, o' night's black arch, the key-stane,
That dreary hour he mounts his beast in;
An' sic a night he takes the road in,
As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in."

This gives us a tolerable idea of the night, through which Tam had to ride. But hear the poet describe it.

"The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last;
The rattling show'rs rose on the blast;
The speedy gleams the darkness swallow'd;
Loud, deep, and lang, the thunder bellowed:
That night, a child might understand,
The De'il had business on his hand."

How the awfulness of the tempest is heightened, by connecting it in the two last lines with the mystery of evil! A more terrific and sublime description of a storm was never written. So much was never uttered in fewer words. And the last two lines is the highest effort of art to give a moral hue to material description.

"Weel mounted on his grey mare, Meg,
A better never lifted leg,
Tam skelpit on thro' dub an' mire,
Despising wind, an' rain, an' fire:
Whiles holding fast his guid blue bonnet;
Whiles crooning o'er some auld Scotch sonnet;
Whiles glow'ring round wi' prudent cares,
Lest bogles catch him unawares;
Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,
Whare ghaists and houlets nightly cry.

By this time he was cross the foord,
Whare in the snaw the chapman smoor'd;

An' past the birks an' meikle stane
Whare drunken Charlie brak's neck-bane;
An' thro' the whins, an' by the cairn,
Whare hunters fand the murder'd bairn;
An' near the thorn, aboon the well,
Whare Mungo's mither hang'd hersel.—
Before him Doon pours a' his floods;
The doublin' storm roars thro' the woods;
The lightnings flash frae pole to pole;
Near and more near the thunders roll;
When, glimmerin' thro' the groanin' trees,
Kirk-Alloway seem'd in a bleeze;
Thro' ilka bore the beams were glancin',
An' loud resounded mirth an' dancin'.

Inspirin' bold John Barleycorn!
What dangers thou canst mak us scorn!
Wi' tippenny, we fear nae evil;
Wi' usquabae we'll face the devil!—
The swats sae ream'd in Tammie's noddle,
Fair play, he car'd na de'ils a boddle.
But Maggie stood right sair astonish'd,
Till, by the heel an' hand admonish'd,
She ventur'd forward on the light;
An' vow! Tam saw an unco sight!
Warlocks an' witches in a dance;
Nae cotillon brent new frae France,
But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, an' reels,
Put life an' mettle i' their heels:

A winnock-bunker i' the east,
There sat auld Nick in shape o' beast;
A towzie tyke, black, grim and large,
To gie them music was his charge;
He screw'd the pipes and gart them skirl
Till roof and rafters a' did dirl.—
Coffins stood round, like open presses;
That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses;
And by some dev'lish cantrip slight,
Each in its cauld hand held a light,—
By which heroic Tam was able
To note upon the haly table,
A murderer's banes in gibbet airns;
Twa span-lang, wee, unchristen'd bairns;
A thief, new-cutted frae a rape,
Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape;
Five tomahawks, wi' bluid red-rusted,
Five scimitars, wi' murder crusted;
A garter, which a babe had strangled;
A knife, a father's throat had mangled,
Whom his ain son o' life bereft,
The gray hairs yet stack to the heft:
Wi' mair o' horrible an' unlawfu',
Which ev'n to name wad be unlawfu'."

I know of no human production which indicates higher art than is presented to us in this narrative. It is the very highest attainment of genius. The elements are

worked together with a skill hardly to be paralleled. But it is that skill which is a native endowment of genius. It is beyond all rules. It is the spontaneous workings of the faculty divine. Look back over the narrative to the beginning, and see what a wonderful work is made out of such common materials. Nature weaves the rainbow out of water and light: but there the elements themselves are beautiful. But she also fabricates the glittering diamond from the charcoal. So genius out of beauty's elements can weave beauty's fabrics. And when beauty's elements are denied to it, it pencils the rudest materials with the living light of the immortal mind, and glorifies itself in making its divine riches visible to less gifted spirits, by imparting the glory of its nature to dull matter, in the works of its hands. And here in this tale of Tam o' Shanter, genius has shown its divine hand. The fingers which pressed the materials have left their own hues of glory upon them. The touch of Midas converted everything into gold. But the touch of genius

converts them into all that is glorious to the fancy and most enrapturing to the heart.

After Tam is mounted on his old mare, we forget the storm which the poet has described with such power, though the impression of it is still upon our spirits, and we are now taken up with the awful associations of the places he has to pass. But the poet, self-possessed and master of his art, has the skill as well as the artistic conception, to bring back into his description the awfulness of the tempest, to keep its effect alive in the mind, and to throw a still gloomier horror over the haunted places.

"The doublin' storm roars through the woods;
The lightnings flash frae pole to pole;
Near and more near the thunders roll;
When, glimmerin' thro' the groanin' trees."

Look back to the narrative, and see the happy manner in which these lines are introduced, at the most proper time, and in the truest order of incident. The groaning of the trees could not have been depicted

to us without again bringing in the storm. Thus the poet manages to keep all the elements of the terrible constantly before us. But then he has also to exhibit constantly the element of the humorous, and in such a combination as to make the whole work true to nature, and true to the human mind. And this he does with a mastery most miraculous. In the weaving of the wonderful woof he never lets a thread fall; but in his wildest flights, with the quickest tact, he works each in at the very point, and at none other, which the greatest possible effect requires.

"Inspirin' bold John Barleycorn!
What dangers thou canst mak' us scorn!
Wi' tippenny we fear nae evil;
Wi' usquebae we'll face the devil.—
The swats sae ream'd in Tammie's noddle,
Fair play, he cared na de'ils a boddle.
But Maggie stood right sair astonish'd,
Till by the heel an' hand admonish'd."

Look back and see how skilfully these lines are introduced. If the narrative had proceeded directly as Kirk Alloway came in

sight, to describe the scene within, the element of the horrible would have gotten too great a preponderance, and the effect would not have been half so happy as it now is.—But the introduction of these lines brings Tam, still drunk, before us on his old mare, and the consciousness that the horrors are all an illusion, is thereby better kept alive in us, as the poet intended they should be to the reader. For in fact, the poet himself is the only warlock who is conjuring up the scenes; and we see that he is in reality talking to Tam all the way. This is a striking peculiarity in this poem, and it gives great life to it. But as the poet says of himself, I must say of myself, as his critic—

"But here my muse her wing maun cow'r,
Sic flights are far beyond her pow'r."

The reader must criticise the rest of Tam o' Shanter for himself.

I come now to speak of Burns as a satirist. And I announce it at once, that he has never been excelled in satire. With

the high prerogative of genius, he has conceived satire in its truest form. And the subjects of his satires were the men and manners of Ayrshire. He deals not in mere common-places, as suitable to the foibles of one age as another. But he satirises the peculiar individualities which he saw then occupying the minds of his neighbours. His satires, like his other poems, are histories of the times. Religious controversy had become general and bitter over Scotland; and as all thinking men took either one side or the other, Burns was drawn into the arena: and he was the most dreaded foe in the whole field of warfare. His weapons were the most terrible, and were wielded with a skill which genius alone has as a gift beyond all art. He took the quiver from Nature herself, and trimmed the arrows to suit himself; for in satire, as in everything else, he was entirely original.—And although more natural than any other satirist, still his satires are further removed from ordinary trains of thought than those of any other poet. They are so unique as

hardly to have resemblance enough to the satires of other poets, to enable us to characterise their peculiarities. They contain, in their highest perfection, all the elements of satire. Wit, humour, burlesque, drollery, caricature, personality in the utmost individuality of characteristic, description the most sprightly, all the various and most unexpected turns of epigram and insinuation, and the whole pervaded with the spirit of irony, are combined in his satires. The most daring satire ever written is "Holy Willie's Prayer." And it is not possible to conceive a more effectual mode of exposing to contempt the creed of an individual and of his party, and at the same time the odiousness of the character of the individual, as it is moulded by that creed, than is exhibited in this satire. One's hair stands on end as he reads the blasphemous prayer. And yet, it cannot be doubted, that it appeared to many clergymen, as well as laymen of that day, to be a fair exhibition, both theoretical and practical, of the extravagant form which Calvinism had as-

sumed in the creed of many. Taking into consideration the end aimed at, and no means within the compass of human genius could be more effectual. One sees with his very eyes the blasphemous creed, as it were, personated in the hoary hypocrite, as he profanes heaven with his prayers and with his thanks. And for scenic description with all the picturesqueness of various incident, and for power of caricature with the utmost distortion of feature, yet entirely true to the possibilities of nature, nothing ever exceeded "The Holy Fair." And for that personality which consists in portraits of individuals, with their particular failings brought out in prominent relief, and their tender points exposed to ridicule, what can exceed "The Kirk's Alarm?" And who would not almost as leave be hanged and gibbeted, as to be one of the victims of "The Twa Herds?" Nothing could be more withering than the irony which runs through this satire, giving causticity to the personal exposure of the individuals ridiculed. And I will not even

ask the man to follow me in my criticism, who has ever read "Death and Doctor Hornbook," without being amazed at the powers of the magician who could conjure up this wonderful satire. It is one of the most remarkable of Burns's productions. A very peculiar feature of Burns's mind is exhibited in it: the capacity of being on terms of the most easy familiarity with every being, however supernatural. He meets Death, and mistaking him for a harvest hand, inquires whether he has been mowing, at a season when others are just sowing. The big scythe on his shoulder put this idea into the poet's head. And as it was dark, and there was a deep gully near where they were talking, Burns shows it to Death, lest he might fall into it and hurt himself. And when they part, as though they were on perfect equality, Burns says with all nonchalance,—

> "I took the way that pleas'd mysel',
> "And sae did Death.

This same peculiarity is exhibited in the

"Address to the Deil." It shows with what ease the poet handled his subjects. He never labours. His genius rather stoops than reaches up. As long as satire shall be relished, will these productions, which imitating none, are inimitable by any, stand forth as among the most perfect utterances of the satiric muse. The black gall of "The English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" is a pleasant draught in comparison with the various cups of Burns's satire. The first is all poison, the latter contains other ingredients which give a heightening to the sensibilities that renders the poison the more torturing. The spirit of the first is passionate hate, that of the other is ironical ridicule, laughing and sneering, making you see your own weakness in the mirror held up by the satirist, and that everybody else imbibing the spirit of the satirist, is laughing and sneering too. And this is satire in its truest form.

As various as are the subjects over which we have passed, and they are but a few of those of which Burns has treated, yet he

treated of none but real subjects. All his subjects belong to Scotland. They sprung up from the realities of Scottish life.

I have not yet spoken of Burns as a moral didactic poet. Here he excels all others. The most manly morality, exhibited in the most living forms, pervades his writings. He had the faculty of exhibiting abstract truths in such a way, as to give them all the force of the ideal conception embodied in the most captivating example.

"Then gently scan your brother man,
Still gentler sister woman;
Though they may gang a kennin' wrang,
To step aside is human:
One point must still be greatly dark,
The moving why they do it:
And just as lamely can ye mark
How far perhaps they rue it."

The singular beauty of the form in which the virtue of charity is here exhibited, is owing to the application of it to the actions of both man and woman; thus giving the abstract truth all the life of

which it is capable in example. There is nothing in which Burns more excels, than in distinct and fascinating exhibitions of moral truths. He is equally as pointed as Pope, and infinitely superior to him in every other quality of a didactic poet.

> "Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
>   Decidedly can try us,
> He knows each chord—its various tone,
>   Each spring—its various bias :
> Then at the balance, let's be mute,
>   We never can adjust it ;
> What's done we partly may compute,
>   But know not what's resisted."

The truth set forth in these lines never has been as well expressed. And there is nothing outside of the Bible, better, either in the doctrines or the mode of expressing them, than the "Epistle to a Young Friend." It is marked by the most subtile apprehensions of the nicest shades of moral principles. And no poet was ever so remarkable as Burns, for connecting high moral reflections with trivial incidents.

This is the chief faculty of the didactic poet.

"Ye ugly, creepin', blastit wonner,
Detested, shunn'd, by saunt and sinner,
How dare ye set your fit upon her,
Sae fine a lady!
Gae somewhere else, and seek your dinner,
On some poor body.

O' Jenny, dinna toss your head,
An' set your beauties a' abread!
Ye little ken what cursed speed,
The blastie's makin'!
Thae winks, and finger-ends, I dread,
Are notice takin'.

O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us,
To see oursels as others see us!
It wad frae monie a blunder free us,
An' foolish notion:
What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us,
And ev'n devotion!"

But I must bring this part of my task to a close. The productions of a natural poet like Burns, are so suggestive, that criticism can hardly ever exhaust them. There is such a variety in Burns's representations of even the most common things,

that his descriptions of the flight of birds, would alone afford a prolific theme for criticism. He has an epithet suited to the peculiar noise that the wings of each kind of bird make. "Chittering wings," "whistling wings," "flittering wings," "whirring wings," "clanging wings," and many other epithets are used in his descriptions of the flight of birds. And all other things are described with just as characteristic variety. And the elements which give most life to description, are always seized upon, and presented with singular felicity. In the description of inanimate things, for instance, when the element of motion enters into them, he always brings out that element in clear relief, and thus gives to it the greatest life. This is seen in these lines,—

> "The chilly frost, beneath the silver beam
> Crept, gently-crusting, o'er the glittering stream."

We almost see the ice forming in this description. It shows with what subtilty

Burns embodies the lively element of motion in his descriptions of nature.

And the mere versification of Burns is extraordinary. He was master of the whole art of throwing his thoughts into musical diction, and of varying it with every fluctuation of thought and feeling. He possessed the greatest facility of inverting sentences, so as to give unexpected turns to thought, as well as to break the monotony of the rhythm; and he had an almost Homeric power of compounding words, so important in heightening our poetic conceptions by a cumulative meaning. Indeed most of those facilities of art, which are generally supposed to be the result of learned culture, are manifested in their highest forms by Burns. They were with him the gifts of genius. The extraordinary quickness and subtilty of his faculties, enabled him to seize, as by a divine tact, all the facilities of art. And when we come to criticise the works of a poet so full of nature, whose art is, in truth, nature, stiff technical rules must be laid aside.

The criticism of such works is no cold business. We must not come to the task with dull eyes, or dull ears, or above all, with dull hearts. All our faculties must be awake. If not inspired ourselves, we should be able to kindle at the inspiration of the poet. We should, as it were, drink in his genius, and see with his eyes, and hear with his ears, and feel with his heart, before we can fully comprehend the work of criticism. The superficial critic, who works by line and rule, and knows no metre and no harmony, but by the number of the syllables, and the exactness of the rhymes, must throw aside his bungling, clumsy, ignorant rules of pedantry, before he can understand even the elements of the various versification of Burns,—a versification as various as the emotions of that most variously tuned of all instruments, the human heart. He must learn that Burns, inspired by the genius of his country, caught the wild notes that came down from the hills, and the soft tunes that floated up from the vales of his native land, and wove

into their melody, words expressive of the sentiments which the tunes themselves breathed into his soul. His songs were conceived and bodied forth in music.—They are gems of thought floating in streams of music. The words and the tune are the song; and not the words by themselves. To talk of number of syllables, and exactness of rhymes, as some have done in criticizing the songs of Burns, shows utter ignorance of the principles of enlightened criticism. Such critics must rise to a higher altitude in the domain of art. They must learn, that all that is highest in art, all that is creative and imaginative, lies beyond the guidance of any rule. The rules of art must always fall short of the flights of genius. Genius will always accomplish something beyond any rule. Genius is a rule to itself. Its works are beautiful, because they are the works of genius. They are cast in a mould of beauty, and come forth impressed with the forms of beauty. It is always some great genius who conceives and embodies in

form, the models of the beautiful in every art. His mind, endowed with a subtile perception, and an exquisite susceptibility to the beauties of nature, by the power of idealization, rises to a higher conception of the beautiful than any object of nature furnishes, and approximates nearer to the divine type, according to the great law of mental progress, by which man is gradually fitted for a higher order of realities. It is from the works of genius that we are to learn the rules of art. We must study these works, until our duller natures catch the ethereal flame that breathes in them, and we are quickened into sympathy, and are thus elevated to a just comprehension of their beauties. These master minds are our lawgivers in the domain of art. They are our prophets standing between us and the kingdom of absolute beauty. It is their lips, that the coal from off the altar of nature has touched. We, the common folk, must listen to their teachings, if we wish to see, and hear, and feel, these higher beauties which it is not

given our duller faculties to read for ourselves in the mysterious book of nature. When Michael Angelo drew the curve of the dome of St. Peter's at Rome, on the given height and breadth, he drew it according to that ideal of a waving line which his divine genius had formed; and its beauty fills every beholder with delight. He had the compasses in his eye, the harmonic proportions in his soul. So, when Praxiteles embodied female beauty in the living marble of the Venus of Cnidus, and Appelles painted it on the breathing canvas of the Venus of Cos, it was their genius fired at the sight of Phryne, the most beautiful woman of Greece, bathing on the sea-shore, that guided their hands in fashioning those master-pieces which fill the air with beauty. So, nothing but genius guided Burns, when he threw into "Tam o' Shanter" that beautiful description of the evanescent nature of pleasures. It was genius working by rules inherent in its own nature, that brought from the widely separate provinces

of nature, the flower of the poppy, the snow-fall, the borealis, and the rainbow, and combined them by the magic chain of poetic analogy, into that beautiful constellation of imagery. What rule of art could teach such workmanship? And, indeed, what rules could have taught Burns how to compose so extraordinary a work as the whole poem? None but the hand of a master working by inspiration, and not by rule, could have brought such discordant materials in subjection to his will, so as to heighten with an unearthly interest, the plainest humorous story. To work with such materials for such ends, requires a power and skill beyond the reach of all rules.

When, therefore, we criticize the works of Burns, we must look to their nature. We must ascertain what they mean. We must carry no theories of criticism to the task. We must not, like Carlyle, in criticizing "Tam o' Shanter," imagine a mystery, and dive into hidden depths to see what is only on the surface. Of all poets, Burns

saw most like common people. All his ideals were but their conceptions exalted. This is the secret of that spell of sympathy which the common mind feels in his poetry. Being the sincerest of men, and extraordinarily susceptible, his songs are peculiarly the expression of his spontaneous feelings. In criticizing these especially, we must look into the human heart, and see how truly the emotions so various and often so conflicting are expressed. Does the heart, when stirred to its depths, always throb in orderly cadences? Are there no sudden impulses, no thrills, no gushes of feeling? Do no abrupt, irregular, confused thoughts stir its emotions into abrupt irregular, confused eddies? How could regular pauses, measured swells, and uniform cadences, express these abrupt, irregular emotions? As are the emotions and thoughts, so must be the vehicles of verse. Burns's fine genius was working according to these principles of art, founded in human nature, when he wrote those songs so deficient in exact rhyme, as his "Highland Mary." It was

agreeable to his own heart thus to sing; and when the music to which they were composed is carried along with the words, as it was by the poet while composing the songs, what are now considered defects in the rhymes, will be found to have their completeness in the tune. The chords of every human heart vibrate the same notes under the same touches of nature; and as those higher minds are tuned the best, we must tune our dull hearts in concord, in order to catch the true music of the soul.

But let it not be supposed that I think rules of criticism cannot aid us in judging of works of art. They may not only enable us to judge of works of art, but also may assist our judgments in forming works of our own. But then, in our criticism, we must distinguish between that part of the work of art which is far beyond the reach of any rule, and that to which rules can be applied. Burns himself has clearly set forth this distinction. "Though the rough material (says he) of fine writing, is undoubtedly the gift of genius, the workman-

ship is as certainly the united efforts of labour, attention, and pains." Now the rough material, all that is creative and imaginative, which is the gift of genius, lies beyond the application of any rule; but the workmanship, by which this material is elaborated, is within the province of rules. But even within the province where rules of criticism can be applied, we must be certain that our rules are founded in nature. And this is no easy matter. For the prejudices of education so warp our judgments and our tastes, that most unnatural things often seem beautiful; and in our narrow views of art, we restrain within artificial limits the rich and various luxuriance of nature, and thus cramp the energy and extinguish the fire of genius. Burns, in his remarks upon Scotch songs, has said something so apposite to the tenor of the doctrines I am advancing, that I will quote them. "There is a great irregularity in the old Scotch songs,—a redundancy of syllables with respect to that exactness of accent and measure that the

English poetry requires,—but which glides in most melodiously with the respective tunes to which they are set. For instance, the fine old song of 'The Mill, Mill O,'—to give it a plain prosaic reading, it halts prodigiously out of measure. On the other hand, the song set to the same tune in 'Bremen's Collection of Scottish Songs,' which begins, 'To Fanny fair could I impart, &c.,' it is most exact measure; and yet, let them both be sung before a real critic—one above the biases of prejudice, but a thorough judge of nature, how flat and spiritless will the last appear, how trite and lamely methodical, compared with the wild warbling cadence,—the heart-moving melody of the first. This is particularly the case with all those airs which end with a hypermetrical syllable. There is a degree of wild irregularity in many of the compositions and fragments which are daily sung to them by my compeers,—the common people,—a certain happy arrangement of old Scottish syllables, and yet, very frequently nothing,—not even like rhyme,

—or, sameness of jingle at the end of the lines. This has made me sometimes imagine, that perhaps it might be possible for a Scotch poet, with a nice judicious ear, to set compositions to many of our most favourite airs,—particularly the class of them mentioned above, independently of ryhme altogether." This ingenious and philosophical criticism, shows what a delicate tact Burns had, in seizing the nicer shades of the principles of versification. And it proves too, that however spontaneous the effusions of genius may be, still these master minds comprehend better than all others, the principles of their art. What in those old Scottish songs would to a mind, trained by the rules of a certain school of criticism, appear exceedingly crude and uncouth, is in reality a beauty founded on a reason in nature. They are composed according to nature's prosody, and not according to the prosody of narrow art. The criticism which finds fault with these songs, on account of their defective rhymes, assumes that rhyme is essential to

all compositions intended to be set to music. Nothing can be more erroneous. Neither the Greeks nor the Romans used rhyme. Their lyrical, as well as their other poetry, is untrammelled by any such artistic help. And if Anacreon could look over modern lyrical poetry, it is not improbable that, so far from considering rhyme an improvement in versification, he would view it somewhat after the manner of Hudibras :—

> "For rhyme the rudder is, of verses,
> With which, like ships, they steer their courses."

It is quite certain, that whatever versification may gain from the help of rhyme, it certainly is apt to lose that melody of rhythm which is dependent on a certain happy arrangement of words, and that variety of cadence which results from the spontaneous "flow of thoughts that voluntary move harmonious numbers." This criticism of Hudibras has more in it than mere wit. Rhyme is apt to become a mere rudder by which the verse is steered. The

versification is apt to become mere see-saw. At the time Burns wrote this criticism, he was not aware, I presume, that rhyme was not used in ancient lyrical poetry, or he could not have doubted that compositions without rhyme were fit to be set to music. His wider literary experience afterwards doubtless gave him fuller information.

The truth is, the rules of criticism, even in that part of art where rules can be applied, have all along been too narrow. They are almost exclusively founded on the experience of one nation, and that the earliest in European civilization. The world has appeared to think that there is not a grace which Grecian art did not catch. That in literature, and sculpture, and architecture, the Greeks attained not only the highest, but every form of beauty possible in art. However true it may be, that they attained the highest beauty, still the experience of modern times has shown, that there are other forms of beauty within the capabilities of art, than those bodied forth by Grecian genius. The enlightened

critic will therefore look over the wide and diversified domain of art, with that enlarged and liberal view, which the expectation of seeing new forms of the beautiful developed, is calculated to inspire, and approve every beauty which seems such to his enlightened judgment, untrammelled by the rules of established criticism. It is in this spirit that I desire the works of Burns to be examined. And it is in this spirit that the world does, and will continue to examine them. There is a potency about them, which smites the heart, and makes it swell out of the shackles of cold criticism. They vindicate by their power, their high place in the temple of fame. The fame of Burns has been continually progressive. In Scotland every heart is warm at the name of their great national poet; and the world is now filled with a scarcely less warm admiration.

"As the sun from out the orient
Pours a wider, warmer light,
Till he floods both earth and ocean,
Blazing from the zenith's height;

So the glory of our poet,
  In its deathless power serene,
Shines,—as rolling time advances,
  Warmer felt, and wider seen:
First Doon's banks and braes contain'd it,
  Then his country form'd its span;
Now the wide world is its empire,
  And its throne the heart of man."

BURNS AS A MAN.

WE have considered Burns as a poet, let us now consider him as a man. In his twenty-third year, we find him engaged in the business of flax-dresser in the little town of Irvine. His condition may be inferred from the following letter, written by him at that time to his father:—

"HONOURED SIR,—

"I have purposely delayed writing, in the hope that I should have the pleasure of seeing you on New-Year's day; but work comes so hard upon us, that I do not choose to be absent on that account, as well as for some other little reasons, which

I shall tell you at meeting. My health is nearly the same as when you were here, only my sleep is a little sounder, and on the whole I am rather better than otherwise, though I mend by very slow degrees. The weakness of my nerves has so debilitated my mind, that I dare neither review past wants, nor look forward into futurity; for the least anxiety or perturbation in my breast produces most unhappy effects on my whole frame. Sometimes, indeed, when for an hour or two my spirits are alightened, I glimmer a little into futurity; but my principal, and indeed my only pleasurable employment, is looking backwards and forwards in a moral and religious way: I am quite transported at the thought, that ere long, perhaps very soon, I shall bid an eternal adieu to all the pains, and uneasiness, and disquietudes of this weary life: for I assure you I am heartily tired of it; and, if I do not very much deceive myself, I could contentedly and gladly resign it.

'The soul, uneasy, and confin'd at home,
Rests and expatiates in a life to come.'

It is for this reason I am more pleased with the 15th, 16th, and 17th verses of the 7th chapter of Revelations, than with any ten times as many verses in the whole Bible, and would not exchange the noble enthusiasm with which they inspire me, for all that this world has to offer. As for this world, I despair of ever making a figure in it. I am not formed for the bustle of the busy, nor the flutter of the gay. I shall never again be capable of entering into such scenes. Indeed, I am altogether unconcerned at the thoughts of this life. I foresee that poverty and obscurity probably await me, and I am in some measure prepared, and daily preparing to meet them. I have but just time and paper to return you my grateful thanks for the lessons of virtue and piety you have given me, which were too much neglected at the time of giving them, but which I hope have been remembered ere it is too late. Present my dutiful respects to my mother, and my

compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Muir; and with wishing you a merry New-Year's day, I shall conclude.

"I am, honoured Sir, your faithful son,
ROBERT BURNS.

"P. S. My meal is nearly out; but I am going to borrow till I get more."

What an awful letter this is for a young man only in his twenty-third year to write! Just entered upon the threshold of life, and already "heartily tired of it!" What is the cause of this unnatural state of mind? "As for this world (says he) I despair of ever making a figure in it. I foresee that poverty and obscurity probably await me." It is ambition stirring in a mind conscious of its own vast powers, yet doomed to dress flax, that has sunk the soul of this young man into the blackest depths of despondency. "My meal is nearly out, but I am going to borrow till I get more." What a statement to come from the lips of one of the proudest and most ambitious spirits whom God ever endowed with a lofty

genius! He was living on oat bread made of meal sent him by his father. And his meal was out, and he had to borrow till he could get more. Is it any wonder, his heart sunk chill within him? And to whom is this letter written? To his father. And who is his father? A peasant. So predominant is ambition in the mind of this young man, that though writing to a peasant father, who could hardly appreciate it, he assigns ambition as the cause of his deep melancholy which he was divulging to him.

This is an important point, from which to look backwards as well as forwards over the life of Burns. We have seized one predominant trait in his character, *ambition;* and we find him in his twenty-third year in the most abject poverty, dressing flax in a little town. Let us then look back over his life before this period, and see what this ambitious young man, of such extraordinary endowments, had been doing in the world. Let him speak for himself.

"I was born (says he) a very poor man's

son. For the first six or seven years of my life my father was gardener to a worthy gentleman of small estate in the neighbourhood of Ayr. Had he continued in that station, I must have marched off to be one of the little underlings about a farm-house; but it was his dearest wish and prayer to have it in his power to keep his children under his own eye, till they could discern between good and evil; so, with the assistance of his generous master, my father ventured on a small farm on his estate. Though it cost the schoolmaster some thrashings, I made an excellent English scholar; and by the time I was ten or eleven years of age, I was a critic in substantives, verbs, and particles. In my infant and boyish days, too, I owed much to an old woman who resided in the family, remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition. She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparitions,

cantrips, giants, enchanted towers, dragons, and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of poetry; but had so strong an effect on my imagination, that to this hour, in nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a sharp look-out in suspicious places; and though nobody can be more sceptical than I am in such matters, yet it often takes an effort of philosophy to shake off their idle terrors.

"My father's generous master died; the farm proved a ruinous bargain; and to clench the misfortune, we fell into the hands of a factor, who sat for the picture I have drawn of one in my tale of 'The Twa Dogs.' My father was advanced in life when he married; I was the eldest of seven children, and he, worn out by early hardships, was unfit for labour. My father's spirit was soon irritated, but not easily broken. There was a freedom in his lease in two years more, and to weather these two years, we retrenched our expenses. We lived very poorly. I was a dexterous ploughman of my age; and the next

oldest to me was a brother (Gilbert) who could drive the plough very well, and help me to thrash the corn. A novel-writer might, perhaps, have viewed these scenes with some satisfaction, but so did not I. My indignation yet boils at the recollection of the scoundrel factor's insolent threatening letters, which used to set us all in tears. This kind of life, the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing moil of a galley-slave, brought me to my sixteenth year. My father struggled on till he reached the freedom in his lease, when he entered on a larger farm, about ten miles farther in the country. It is during the time that we lived on this farm that my little story is most eventful. I was at the beginning of this period, perhaps the most ungainly awkward boy in the parish—no *solitaire* was less acquainted with the ways of the world. What I knew of ancient story was gathered from Salmon's and Guthrie's Geographical Grammars; and the ideas I had formed of modern manners, of literature, and criticism, I got from the

Spectator. These, with Pope's works, some plays of Shakspeare, Tull and Dickson on Agriculture, The Pantheon, Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, Stackhouse's History of the Bible, Justice's British Gardener's Directory, Boyle's Lectures, Allan Ramsay's works, Taylor's Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin, A Select Collection of English Songs, and Hervey's Meditations, had formed the whole of my reading. The collection of songs was my *vade mecum.* I pored over them driving my cart or walking to labour, song by song, verse by verse, carefully noting the true, tender, or sublime, from affectation or fustian. I am convinced I owe to this practice much of my critic craft, such as it is.

"In my seventeenth year, to give my manners a brush, I went to a country dancing-school. My father had an unaccountable antipathy to these meetings, and my going was, what to this moment I repent, in opposition to his wishes. The great fault of my life was to want an aim. I had felt early some stirrings of ambition, but

they were the blind gropings of Homer's Cyclops round the walls of his cave. I saw my father's situation entailed on me perpetual labour. The only two openings by which I could enter the Temple of Fortune, were the gate of niggardly economy, or the path of little chicaning bargaining. The first is so contracted an aperture, I never could squeeze myself into it—the last I always hated—there was contamination in the very entrance! Thus abandoned of aim or view in life, with a strong appetite for sociability, as well from native hilarity as from a pride of observation and remark: a constitutional melancholy or hypochondriasm that made me fly solitude; add to these incentives to social life, my reputation for bookish knowledge, a certain wild logical talent, and a strength of thought something like the rudiments of good sense; and it will not seem surprising that I was generally a welcome guest where I visited, or any wonder that always, where two or three met together, there was I among them. But far beyond all other im-

pulses of my heart was *un penchant a l'adorable moitie du gense humain.* My heart was completely tinder, and was eternally lighted up by some goddess or other; and, as in every other warfare in this world, my fortune was various; sometimes I was received with favour, and sometimes I was mortified with a repulse. At the plough, scythe, or reap-hook, I feared no competitor; and thus I set absolute want at defiance; and as I never cared farther for my labours than while I was in actual exercise, I spent the evenings in the way after my own heart. A country lad seldom carries on a love adventure without an assisting confidant.

"I possessed a curiosity, zeal, and intrepid dexterity, that recommended me as a proper second on these occasions; and, I dare say, I felt as much pleasure in being in the secret of half the lovers of the parish of Tarbolton, as ever did statesman in knowing the intrigues of half the courts of Europe. The very goose-feather in my hand seems to know instinctively the well-

worn path of my imagination, the favourite theme of my song; and is with difficulty restrained from giving you a couple of paragraphs on the love-adventures of my compeers, the humble inmates of the farm-house and cottage; but the grave sons of science, ambition, or avarice, baptize these things by the name of follies. To the sons of labour and poverty, they are matters of the most serious nature; to them, the ardent hope, the stolen interview, the tender farewell, are the greatest and most delicious parts of their enjoyments.

"Another circumstance in my life, which made some alteration in my mind and manners, was, that I spent my nineteenth summer on a smuggling coast, a good distance from home, at a noted school, to learn mensuration, surveying, dialling, &c., in which I made a pretty good progress. But I made greater progress in the knowledge of mankind. The contraband trade was at that time very successful, and it sometimes happened to me to fall in with those who carried it on. Scenes of swaggering riot and

roaring dissipation were, till this time new to me; but I was no enemy to social life. Here, though I learnt to fill my glass, and to mix without fear in a drunken squabble, yet I went on with a high hand with my geometry, till the sun entered Virgo, a month which is always a carnival in my bosom, when a charming *fillete*, who lived next door to the school, overset my trigonometry, and set me off at a tangent from the spheres of my studies. I, however, struggled on with my sines and co-sines, for a few days more; but stepping into the garden one charming noon to take the sun's altitude, there I met my angel,

'Like Proserpine gathering flowers,
Herself a fairer flower.'

It was in vain to think of doing any more good at school. The remaining week I staid, I did nothing but craze the faculties of my soul about her, or steal out to meet her; and the two last nights of my stay in the country, had sleep been a mortal sin,

the image of this modest and innocent girl had kept me guiltless.

"I returned home very considerably improved. My reading was enlarged with the important addition of Thomson's and Shenstone's works; I had seen human nature in a new phasis; and I engaged several of my school-fellows to keep up a literary correspondence with me. This improved me in composition. I had met with collections of letters by the wits in Queen Anne's reign, and I pored over them most devoutly. I kept copies of any of my own letters that pleased me, and a comparison between them and the composition of most of my correspondents, flattered my vanity. I carried this whim so far, that though I had not three farthings' worth of business in the world, yet almost every post brought me as many letters, as if I had been the most plodding son of the day-book and ledger.

"My life flowed on much in the same course till my twenty-third year. *Vive l'amour, et vive la bagatelle,* were my sole

principles of action. The addition of two more authors to my library gave me great pleasure. Sterne and Mackenzie—Tristram Shandy and the Man of Feeling were my bosom favourites. Poesy was still a darling walk for my mind, but it was only indulged in according to the humour of the hour.—I had usually half-a-dozen or more pieces on hand: I took up one or the other, as it suited the momentary tone of the mind, and dismissed the work as it bordered on fatigue. My passions, when once lighted up, raged like so many devils till they got vent in rhyme; and then conning over my verses, like a spell, soothed all into quiet! None of the rhymes of those days are in print, except 'Winter, a Dirge,' the eldest of my printed pieces, 'The Death of poor Maillie,' 'John Barleycorn,' and songs, first, second, and third. Song second was the ebullition of that passion which ended the forementioned school business.

"My twenty-third year was to me an important one. Partly through whim, and partly, that I wished to set about doing

something in life, I joined a flax-dresser in a neighbouring town, (Irvine,) to learn his trade."

We have now come to the time in Burns's life, when we found him writing that most melancholy letter. We have seen, from his own account of himself, that when a mere boy, he had read Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, and that he had resorted to the most laborious means of improving his mind—having already realized the superiority of his endowments. Surely, the boy who had not only the talent to relish, but the ambition also to read, such a work as Locke's Essay, could not but despond at finding himself, in his twenty-third year, drudging as a flax-dresser, in a little town, and living chiefly on oat-bread, made sometimes of borrowed meal. The letter, with which I have ushered in his life, lifts the veil from his heart, and lays bare the secret agonies. And what bosom, not dead to all feelings for another's woe, can contemplate the struggles, without a tear? "I felt early, (says he,) some

strivings of ambition, but they were the blind gropings of Homer's Cyclops round the walls of his cave. I saw my father's situation entailed on me perpetual labour. The only two openings, by which I could enter the Temple of Fortune, were the gate of niggardly economy, or the path of little chicaning bargaining. The first is so contracted an aperture, I never could squeeze myself into it—the last I always hated—there was contamination at the very entrance." If this be a description of his feelings and situation when he was a mere boy, what must have been the desolation of his heart, when at twenty-three, with his soul reaching up in high aspirations, he was but a flax-dresser. "The blind gropings of Homer's Cyclops round the walls of his cave," though so grand a description of circumvented ambition, must be but a feeble representation of the feelings and struggles of Robert Burns at this time. He had been beset with as many difficulties as ever lay in the path of man. Poverty of the abject

sort, his father broken down in spirit and in health, himself the eldest of seven children, the whole family often set into tears by the insolent letters of a landlord's factor,—"the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing moil of a galley-slave,"—made up the chief thread of the history of his life. And yet he had fought manfully through all. He had cultivated his mind more than most young men who have the best opportunities; and so desirous was he of every accomplishment, that, against his father's strong dissent, he went to a dancing school. How does this portion of the life of Burns impress us with the greatness of his mind, the strength of his will, and the natural nobility of his character. For what was he thus struggling up against the ills of life, and cultivating his proud and sensitive spirit, when it was already too great for his situation? There was no field of exertion into which he could enter, to reap those trophies of renown, which his ambitious spirit was burning to win, not for his own glory alone, but for the good of his country

and of his kind. Conscious of a mind of the first order, with a penetrating glance that went up from earth to heaven, and comprehended the scheme of creation; and fully appreciating the true dignity of man, and panting to enter on the highest arenas of life, and in noble efforts of enterprise and duty to assert his right to the first position of honour, and thus satisfy the gulf-like cravings which the Creator had given to his great soul for these noble purposes, he found himself tied down to the meanest, dreariest, most withering servile work. And even hope could hardly throw a cheering glimmer into the future. The aristocratic institutions of his country precluded all hope of entrance into any of the higher occupations of life, even if his own poverty had not stood in the way. He knew—he realized in his very soul—that fortune was against him. So far as he could see, the only entrance for him into her temple, was through "the gate of niggardly economy, or the path of little chicaning bargaining." His great soul could not be

dwarfed, so as to squeeze through such little apertures as these. He must enter with true nobility, in at the gilded doorway, or not at all. He must fill a niche, appropriate to the divine glories of intellect, and not squat on the ground, amongst the bloated toads of wealth. The great genius of Burns felt its high behest; and it was longing to fulfil it in some way.

Burns were not doomed to the drudgery of dressing flax, long. The shop, with its contents, was destroyed by fire, and he was left without a sixpence. His father's misfortunes, too, were gathering around in still darker clouds. "A difference commencing (says Burns) between him and his landlord, as to the terms, after three years' tossing and whirling in the vortex of litigation, my father was just saved from the horrors of a jail by a consumption, which, after two years' promises, kindly stepped in and carried him away, to where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. When my father died, his all went among the hell-hounds that growl in

the kennels of justice: but we made a shift to collect a little money in the family amongst us, with which, to keep us together, my brother and I took a neighbouring farm. I entered on this farm with a full resolution,—'Come, go to; I will be wise!' I read farming books, I calculated crops, I attended markets, and in short, in spite of the devil, and the world, and the flesh, I believe I should have been a wise man; but the first year, from unfortunately buying bad seed, the second, from a late harvest, we lost half our crops. This overset all my wisdom."

But all this could not crush the brave spirit of Robert Burns. Providence had devolved upon him the care and support of his father's family; and his noble heart was willing to submit to any drudgery in the performance of so sacred a duty. But then, he had not a soul to be harnessed like an ox, to everlasting toil. The eagle is constrained by its very nature, to soar aloft on its strong wings, and gaze with its fiery eye on the full splen-

dours of the sun. So genius, by its very spiritual necessities, is compelled to ascend to that region of grand contemplations, where the visions of fancy are spread out in all their various glory. And Burns had found out, that poetry was the province in which his genius might find food for its cravings, and scope for its achievements. We have seen, that in his sixteenth year, he had tuned his lyre to sing a song of love. And from that time he had never hung it upon the willows. It had now become necessary to his happiness.

"Leeze me on rhyme! it's aye a treasure,
My chief, amaist, my only pleasure,
At hame, a-fiel', at wark, or leisure,
The Muse, poor hizzie!
Tho' rough an' raploch be her measure,
She 's seldom lazy."

But let us return to our conversation with Burns; for an autobiography when written by a sincere man, is like a conversation, and is the next best means of getting at his character. "I now began, (says

he,) to be known in the neighbourhood, as a maker of rhymes. The first of my poetical offspring that saw the light, was a burlesque lamentation on a quarrel between two reverend Calvinists, both of them *dramatis personæ* in my 'Holy Fair.' I had a notion myself that the piece had some merit; but to prevent the worst, I gave a copy of it to a friend, who was very fond of such things, and told him that I could not guess who was the author of it, but that I thought it pretty clever. With a certain description of the clergy, as well as laity, it met with a roar of applause. 'Holy Willie's Prayer' next made its appearance, and alarmed the Kirk-session so much that they held several meetings, to look over their spiritual artillery, if happily any of it might be pointed against profane rhymers. Unluckily for me, my wanderings led me on another side within point-blank shot of their heaviest metal. This is the unfortunate story that gave rise to my printed poem, 'The Lament.' This was a most melancholy affair, which I cannot yet bear to

reflect on, and had very nearly given me one or two of the principal qualities for a place among those who have lost the chart, and mistaken the reckoning of rationality. I gave up my part of the farm to my brother; in truth it was only nominally mine; and made what little preparation was in my power for Jamaica. But before leaving my native country for ever, I resolved to publish my poems. I weighed my productions as impartially as was in my power; I thought they had merit, and it was a delicious idea that I should be called a clever fellow, even though it should never reach my ears,—a poor negro-driver,—or perhaps a victim to that inhospitable clime, and gone to the world of spirits! I can truly say that *pauvre inconnu*, as I then was, I had pretty nearly as high an idea of myself and of my works as I have at this moment, when the public has decided in their favour. It ever was my opinion that the mistakes and blunders, both in a rational and religious point of view, of which we see thousands daily guilty, are owing to their igno-

rance of themselves.—To know myself had been all along my constant study. I weighed myself alone; I balanced myself with others; I watched every means of information, to see how much ground I occupied as a man and as a poet; I studied assiduously nature's design in my formation,—where the lights and shadows in my character were intended. I was pretty confident my poems would meet with some applause; but at the worst the roar of the Atlantic would deafen the voice of censure, and the novelty of West Indian scenes make me forget neglect. I threw off six hundred and fifty. My vanity was highly gratified by the reception I met with from the public. And besides, I pocketed, all expenses deducted, nearly twenty pounds. This sum came very seasonably, as I was thinking of indenting myself, for want of money to procure my passage. As soon as I was master of nine guineas, the price of wafting me to the torrid zone, I took a steerage passage in the first ship that was to sail from the Clyde, for

'Hungry ruin had me in the wind.'

I had been for some days skulking from covert to covert, under all the terrors of a jail; as some ill-advised people had uncoupled the merciless pack of the law at my heels. I had taken the last farewell of my friends; my chest was on the road to Greenoch; I had composed the last song I should ever measure in Caledonia,—'The Gloomy Night is gathering fast,' when a letter from Dr. Blacklock to a friend of mine, overthrew all my schemes, by opening new prospects to my poetic ambition. The doctor belonged to a set of critics, for whose applause I had not dared to hope. His opinion, that I would meet with encouragement in Edinburgh for a second edition, fired me so much that away I posted for that city without a single acquaintance, or a single letter of introduction. The baneful star that had so long shed its blasting influence in my zenith for once made a revolution to the nadir; and a kind Providence placed me under the

patronage of one of the noblest of men, the Earl of Glencairn.

"I need relate no farther. At Edinburgh I was in a new world; I mingled among many classes of men, but all of them new to me, and I was all attention to 'catch' the characters and 'the manners living as they rise.' Whether I profitted, time will show."

We have thus traced Burns through the trying vicissitudes of his life, up to the period when he was, by a most unexpected event, just as he was on the way to embark as an exile for a foreign land, made to hope that his own dear country might still be his home. My heart has often been moved by a brother's love for Burns, at the troubles which his genius, no less than his indiscretions, brought upon him. I have often pictured him to myself, in a foreign land, and the recollections of home rushing on his tender heart. Let any one, who has ever fully realized the true pathos of that song by Byron, "When I left thy shores, O Naxos," as it is sung to its kindred

Greek air, and when his heart is melted, as it cannot but be, by the stanzas,—

> "When some hand the strain awaking,
> Of my home, my native shore,
> Then 'twas first I wept, O Naxos,
> That I ne'er should see thee more;"

consider what would have been the feelings of the far tenderer heart of Burns in exile, "when some hand the strain awaking, of his home, his native shore!" The recollections of his early home on the banks of the Ayr, would have broken his heart. Providence would not put this woe of exile into the cup of his affliction. Ravished by the strains of his lyre, the critics of the British Athens, called him from his despair, to honour him in the metropolis of his country. Let us follow him in his pilgrimage.

Burns, now in his twenty-seventh year, set out on foot for Edinburgh, and arrived there the last of November, 1786. So fatigued was he by the walk, that for two days he was unable to leave his room. He

shared the apartment and bed of a young friend, a Mr. Richmond, in an obscure boarding-house. He had come to Edinburgh without a single letter of introduction. And he knew no one of note except the celebrated Dugald Stewart, with whom he had once dined in Ayrshire. The object of his visit was to publish a second edition of his poems; and they had been read, by the high, the low, the lettered and the unlettered, and were equally admired by all. It was soon heard, that the author of these singular productions was in the city. Curiosity was of course alive to see this poet of the plough. A prospectus for the publication of the poems was drawn out, and a vast number were printed and circulated; and subscriptions came pouring in with a rapidity then unknown in the history of Scottish literature. The nobility, the men of letters, the husbandmen, the shepherds, the mechanics, all subscribed in a liberal manner. The Caledonian Hunt, an association of the chief of the northern nobility, took one hundred copies; Creech,

the publisher, took five hundred: the Earl of Eglington, forty-two; the Duchess of Gordon, twenty-one; the Earl of Glencairn and his Countess, twenty-four; the Scots College at Valladolid, the Scots College at Douay, the Scots at Paris, the Scots Benedictine Monastery at Ratisbon, all took copies; and may other persons subscribed for a large number of copies. Blair, Robertson, Blacklock, Smith, Ferguson, Stewart, Mackenize, Tytler, and Lords Craig and Monbaddo carried subscription lists in their pockets, and procured names through their wide acquaintance. Burns had thus fully succeeded in the publication of his poems.

But the great point of interest is, how did Burns himself appear to the polite and learned circles of Edinburgh? Never in the history of the world was any one ushered by so sudden a transition from the humblest life into the most elevated. It seems almost incredible, that any one under such circumstances could deport himself properly. A man from the plough, who had been

working on no higher wages than seven pounds a year, translated at once into as cultivated a society as any in the world! But the universal testimony is, that all were as much charmed by the propriety of his manners, as by the mastery of his genius. Perhaps no man ever possessed greater conversational powers. The highest eloquence, the tenderest pathos, the keenest wit, the broadest and the merriest humour, the quickest and most brilliant sallies of repartee, were the ready elements of his conversation, which could be combined and varied at will, so as to suit every occasion, give interest to every fact, kindle up every feeling, mould every heart into any mood which suited either the wisdom, the folly, or the caprice of the moment. When he went to any of the neighbouring towns, as soon as it was known that Burns was at the tavern, the servants and the hostlers would leave their work and go to catch some electric sentence from his lips. Their dull hearts were kindled into joyousness by the scintillations

of his fancy, and they gloried in being drawn by the attractions of his genius into the magic circle of its enchantments. All this sorcery could Burns exercise over the minds and hearts of the common people. Let us see, then, how these powers availed him in the learned, the polite, and brilliant society of the highest walks of life.

Dugald Stewart, a cool sagacious philosopher, accustomed to all the conventionalities of polite society, and by his whole manner of life disposed to ascribe as much as possible to the force of learning, gives this account of Burns, in a letter to Dr. Currie: "The first time I saw Robert Burns was on the 23rd of October, 1786, when he dined at my house in Ayrshire, together with our common friend, Mr. John Mackenzie, surgeon in Mauchline, to whom I am indebted for the pleasure of his acquaintance. I am enabled to mention the date particularly, by some verses which Burns wrote after he returned home, and in which the day of our meeting is recorded. I cannot positively say at this dis-

tance of time, whether at the period of our first acquaintance, the Kilmarnock edition of his poems had been just published, or was yet in press. I suspect that the latter was the case, as I have still in my possession copies, in his own hand-writing, of some of his favourite performances, particularly of his verses, 'On turning up a Mouse with his plough,' 'On the Mountain Daisy,' and 'The Lament.' On my return to Edinburgh, I showed the volume, and mentioned what I knew of the author's history, to several of my friends, and among others, to Mr. Henry Mackenzie, who first recommended him to public notice in the ninety-seventh number of 'The Lounger.' At this time Burns's prospects in life were so extremely gloomy, that he had seriously formed a plan of going out to Jamaica in a very humble situation—not, however, without lamenting that his want of patronage should force him to think of a project so repugnant to his feelings, when his ambition aimed at no

higher an object than the situation of an exciseman, or gauger, in his own country. He came to Edinburgh early in the winter. The attentions which he received during his stay in town, from all ranks and descriptions of persons, were such as would have turned any head but his own. I cannot say that I could perceive any unfavourable effect which they left on his mind. He retained the same simplicity of manners and appearance, which had struck me so forcibly when I first saw him in the country; nor did he seem to feel any additional self-importance from the number and rank of his acquaintance. His dress was perfectly suited to his situation, —plain and unpretending, with sufficient attention to neatness. If I recollect right, he always wore boots, and when on more than usual ceremony, buckskin breeches. His manners were then, as they continued afterwards, simple, manly, and independent; strongly expressive of conscious genius and worth, but without any thing that indicated forwardness, arrogance, or vanity. He took

his share in conversation, but not more than belonged to him; and listened with apparent attention and deference, on subjects where his want of education deprived him of the means of information. If there had been a little more gentleness and accommodation in his temper, he would, I think, have been still more interesting; but he had been accustomed to give law in the circle of his ordinary acquaintance, and his dread of any thing approaching to meanness or servility, rendered his manner somewhat decided and hard. Nothing, perhaps, was more remarkable among his various attainments, than the fluency, and precision, and originality of his language, when he spoke in company; more particularly as he aimed at purity in his turn of expression, and avoided, more successfully than most Scotchmen, the peculiarities of Scottish phraseology.

"In the course of the spring of 1787, he called on me once or twice at my request, and walked with me to Braid Hills in the neighbourhood of the town, when he

charmed me still more by his private conversation, than he had ever done in company. He was passionately fond of the beauties of nature; and I recollect he once told me, when I was admiring a distant prospect in one of our morning walks, that the sight of so many smoking cottages gave a pleasure to his mind, which none could understand who had not witnessed, like himself, the happiness and worth which they contained. In his political principles he was a Jacobite; which was, perhaps, owing partly to this, that his father was originally from the estate of Lord Mareschall. Indeed, he did not appear to have thought much on such subjects, nor very consistently. He had a very strong sense of religion, and expressed deep regret at the levity with which he had heard it treated occasionally in some convivial meetings which he frequented. I speak of him as he was in the winter of 1796—7; for afterwards we met but seldom, and our conversation turned chiefly on his literary projects or his private affairs. I do not re-

collect whether it appears or not from any of your letters to me, that you had ever seen Burns. If you have, it is superfluous for me to add, that the idea his conversation conveyed of the powers of his mind, exceeded, if possible, that which is suggested by his writings. Among the poets whom I have happened to know, I have been struck, in more than one instance, with the unaccountable disparity between their general talents and the occasional inspirations of their more favoured moments. But all the faculties of Burn's mind were, as far as I could judge, equally vigorous; and his predilection for poetry was rather the result of his own enthusiastic and impassioned temper, than of a genius exclusively adapted to that species of composition. From his conversation, I should have pronounced him to be fitted to excel in whatever walk of ambition he had chosen to exert his abilities. Among the subjects on which he was accustoned to dwell, the characters of the individuals with whom he happened to meet was

plainly a favourite one. The remarks he made on them were always shrewd and pointed, though frequently inclining too much to sarcasm. His praise of those he loved was sometimes indiscriminate and extravagant; but this, I suspect, proceeded rather from the caprice and humour of the moment, than from the effects of attachment in blinding his judgment. His wit was ready, and always impressed with the marks of a vigorous understanding, but to my taste, not often pleasing or happy.

"Notwithstanding various reports I heard during the preceding winter, of Burns's predilection for convivial and not very select society, I should have concluded in favour of his habits of sobriety, from all of him that ever fell under my own observation. He told me, indeed, himself, that the weakness of his stomach was such as to deprive him of any merit in his temperance. I was, however, somewhat alarmed about the effect of his now comparatively sedentary and luxurious life, when he confessed to me, the first night he spent in my house

after his winter's compaign in town, that he had been much disturbed when in bed by a palpitation at his heart, which, he said, was a complaint to which he had of late become subject.

"In the summer of 1787, I passed some weeks in Ayrshire, and saw Burns occasionally. I think that he made a pretty long excursion that season to the Highlands, and that he also visited, what Beatty calls the Arcadian ground of the Teviot and the Tweed. In the course of the same season I was led by curiosity to attend for an hour or two, a Mason-Lodge in Mauchline, where Burns presided. He had occasion to make some short unpremeditated compliments to different individuals, from whom he had no reason to expect a visit, and everything he said was happily conceived, and forcibly as well as fluently expressed. If I am not mistaken, he told me that, in that village, before going to Edinburgh, he had belonged to a small club of such inhabitants as had a taste for books, when they used to converse and debate on

any interesting questions that occurred to them in the course of their reading. His manner of speaking in public, had evidently the marks of some practice in extempore elocution.

"I must not omit to mention, what I have always considered as characteristical in a high degree of true genius, the extreme facility and good-nature of his taste in judging of the compositions of others, when there was any real ground for praise. I repeated to him my passages of English poetry, with which he was unacquainted, and have more than once witnessed the tears of admiration and rapture with which he had heard them. The collection of songs by Dr. Aiken, which I first put in his hands, he read with unmixed delight, notwithstanding his former efforts in that very difficult species of writing; and I have little doubt that it had some effect in polishing his subsequent compositions.

"In judging of prose, I do not think his taste was equally sound. I once read to him a passage or two in Franklin's works,

which I thought very happily executed, upon the model of Addison; but he did not appear to relish or perceive the beauty which they derived from their exquisitive simplicity, and spoke of them with indifference, when compared with the point and antithesis, and quaintness of Junius. The influence of this taste is very perceptible in his own prose compositions, although their great and various excellences, render some of them scarcely less objects of wonder than his poetical performances. The late Dr. Robertson used to say, that, considering his education, the former seemed to him the more extraordinary of the two.

"His memory was uncommonly retentive, at least for poetry, of which he recited to me frequently, long compositions with the most minute accuracy. They were chiefly ballads, and other pieces in our Scottish dialect; great part of them (he told me) he had learned in his childhood, from his mother, who delighted in such recitations, and whose poetical taste, rude

as it probably was, gave, it is presumable, the first direction to her son's genius.

"The last time I saw him, was during the winter of 1789-90, when he passed an evening with me at Drumseugh, in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, where I was then living. My friend, Mr. Allison, was the only other person in company. I never saw him more agreeable nor more interesting."

What stronger evidence could there be of the extraordinary mental endowments of Robert Burns, than is furnished in this account, given by so celebrated a man as Dugald Stewart? Like every one else, Stewart was amazed and charmed by Burns's conversation, even more than by his poetry; and was convinced that he was "fitted to excel in whatever walk of ambition he had chosen to exert his abilities." Professor Walker says the same:—"In conversation, Burns was powerful; his conceptions and expressions were of corresponding vigour, and on all subjects were as remote as possible from common-place." And Heron

says:—"The conversation of Burns was in comparison with the formal and exterior circumstances of his education, perhaps even more wonderful than his poetry. He affected no soft airs, or graceful motions of politeness, which might have ill accorded with the rustic plainness of his native manners. Conscious superiority of mind taught him to associate with the great, the learned, and the gay, without being over-awed into any such bashfulness as might have made him confused in thought, or hesitating in elocution. In conversation, he displayed a sort of intuitive quickness and rectitude of judgment upon every subject that arose; the sensibility of his heart, and the vivacity of his fancy, gave a rich colouring to whatever reasoning he was disposed to advance, and his language in conversation was not at all less happy than his writings; for these reasons, he did not fail to please immediately after having been first seen. I remember the late Dr. Robertson once observed to me, that he had scarcely ever met with any

man,.whose conversation discovered greater vigour and activity of mind than that of Burns." With such powers of conversation, it may well be supposed, that Burns attracted great attention in the polite circles of Edinburgh. "The attentions (says Dugald Stewart) which he received during his stay in town, from all ranks and descriptions of persons, were such as would have turned any head but his own. I cannot say that I could perceive any unfavourable effect which they left on his mind." What a tribute is this to the manliness of his character!

Walter Scott, when about fifteen years of age, saw Burns while he was in Edinburgh. Let us hear what impression he made upon this great genius! "As for Burns, I may may truly say, *Virgilium vidi tantum.* I was a lad of fifteen, in 1786-87, when he came first to Edinburgh, but had sense and feeling enough to be much interested in his poetry, and would have given the world to know him; but I had very little acquaintance with any lite-

rary people, and still less with the gentry of the West country, the two sets whom he most frequented. Mr. Thomas Grierson was at that a clerk of my father's. He knew Burns, and promised to ask him to his lodgings to dinner, but had no opportunity to keep his word; otherwise I might have seen more of this distinguished man. As it was, I saw him one day at the late Professor Fergusson's, where there were several gentlemen of literary reputation, among whom I remember the celebrated Mr. Dugald Stewart. Of course we youngsters sat silent, looked and listened. The only thing I remember, which was remarkable in Burns's manner, was the effect produced upon him by a print of Banbury's representing a soldier lying dead on the snow, his dog sitting in misery on one side,—on the other, his widow, with a child in her arms. These lines were written beneath:

'Cold on Canadian hills, or Minden's plain,
Perhaps that parent wept her soldier slain,—

Bent o'er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew,
The big drops, mingling with the milk he drew,
Gave the sad presage of his future years,
The child of misery baptized in tears.'

Burns seemed much affected by the print, or rather, the ideas which it suggested to his mind. He actually shed tears. He asked whose the lines were; and it chanced that nobody but myself remembered, that they occur in the half-forgotten poem of Langhorne's, called by the unpromising title of "The Justice of Peace." I whispered my information to a friend present, who mentioned it to Burns, who rewarded me with a look and a word, which, though of mere civility, I then received, and still recollect with great pleasure.

"His person was strong and robust; his manner rustic, not clownish; a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity, which received part of its effect, perhaps, from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents. There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical charac-

ter and temperament. It was large, and of a dark cast, glowed (I say literally *glowed*) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen some of the most distinguished men of my time. His conversation expressed perfect self-confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of the time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness; and when he differed in opinion, he did not hesitate to express it firmly, yet at the same time, with modesty. I do not remember any part of his conversation distinctly enough to be quoted; nor did I ever see him again, except in the street, where he did not recognise me, as I could not expect he should. He was much caressed in Edinburgh, but (considering what literary emoluments have been since his day) the efforts made for his relief were extremely trifling.

"I remember, on this occasion, I thought Burns's acquaintance with English poetry

was rather limited, and also, that having twenty times the abilities of Allan Ramsay and of Fergusson, he talked of them with too much humility as his models: there was, doubtless, national predilection in his estimate.

"This is all I can tell you of Burns. I have only to add, that his dress corresponded with his manners. He was like a farmer dressed in his best to dine with the laird. I do not speak *in malam partem*, when I say, I never saw a man in company with his superiors in station and information, more perfectly free from the reality or the affectation of embarrassment. I was told, but did not observe it, that his address to females was extremely defferential, and always with a turn either to the pathetic or humorous, which engaged their attention particularly. I have heard the late Duchess of Gordon remark this. I do not know anything I can add to these recollections of forty years since."

This narrative of Scott, is certainly calculated to give us a high estimate of the

abilities of Burns. Indeed, it is impossible for any one to resist the conviction, that Burns was one of the most intellectual of the human race—a man of the highest order of mind, and of the most robust energy of character. But the last sentence in this narrative presents to us the most prominent trait in the character of Burns, and opens the way, to the most interesting view of him, in the society of Edinburgh. From his earliest youth, Burns was remarkable for his susceptibility to the charms of female society. And as he grew older, and his mind expanded, this susceptibility increased in depth, in scope, and in delicacy. In his own account of himself, which I have used so freely, it is seen that nearly all the pleasure of his life was derived from the society of the gentler sex. But in that narrative, which was evidently written in rather a facetious mood, he has left out the most striking passage of his whole life, that which made the deepest impression on his heart. And this has

always given me a more impressive idea of the intensity of his feelings upon this subject, than even the immortal odes in which he has celebrated the hallowed memory. He feared in that narrative to raise the veil from the sweet memories of Mary Campbell. He felt that he could not trust himself to give a narrative of his life, if he dared to touch that hallowed theme. It was only when his heart was touched to its inmost sanctuary of feeling, and in the silence of solitude, that he ventured on that recollection. In his memoranda, Burns makes this record: "After a pretty long trial of the most ardent, reciprocal affection, we met, by appointment, on the second Sunday of May, in a sequestered spot on the banks of the Ayr, where we spent a day in taking a farewell, before she should embark for the West Highlands, to arrange matters among her friends for our projected change of life. At the close of the autumn following, she crossed the sea to meet me at Greenock, where she had scarce landed, when she was

seized with a malignant fever, which hurried my dear girl to her grave in a few days, before I could even learn of her illness." Cromek says that "this adieu was performed in a striking and moving way: the lovers stood on each side of a small brook, they laved their hands in the stream, and holding a Bible between them, pronounced their vows to be faithful to each other. They parted never to meet again."

The Bible on which they made their vows, was lately in the possession of a sister of Mary Campbell. On the first volume, is written by the hand of Burns, "And ye shall not swear by my name falsely: I am the Lord. Leviticus, chap. xix. 5, 12." On the second volume, there is written in the same hand, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths. St. Matthew, chap. v. 33." And on the blank leaves of both volumes, is impressed his mark as a mason, and signed below, "Robert Burns, Mosgeil." Mary Campbell was a peasant's daughter, and at the time she captivated

the heart of Burns, lived in the humble situation of dairy-maid in the Castle of Montgomery. She is said to have been very beautiful, and of the sweetest character. With a peculiar susceptibility to the charms of woman, heightened and hallowed by the tender memory of this touching incident in his life, much interest attaches to the manner, in which Burns deported himself, towards the ladies of the refined society of Edinburgh.

The Duchess of Gordon, very beautiful, very witty, and accomplished in all those graces which cultivated society lends to the natural elegancies of a high-bred woman, was at this time at the head of fashion in Edinburgh. Having a taste for poetry, she was so far charmed by the muse of Burns, that she not only patronised his publication in the most liberal manner, but she sought his acquaintance. and invited him to her social entertainments. So captivated was she by his conversation, that she declared he was the only man she ever saw, whose conversation carried her

off her feet. Burns was also invited to the splendid entertainments of Lord Monboddoo. That accomplished, but eccentric nobleman, gave splendid suppers after the fashion of the ancients. His tables were filled with the choicest wines, served in decanters of a Grecian pattern, wreathed with flowers. Paintings by the ancient masters adorned his halls; while music, and odours of various perfume, diffused from visible and invisible sources, lent their mingled charms to the classic scene of social life. What a spectacle it must have been, to see, in a brilliant scene of aristocratic grandeur like this, Robert Burns, just from the plough, surrounded by a throng of jewelled duchesses, attracted around him by the sorcery of his conversation, flushed in their cheeks, and brightening in their eyes, as the spell grew stronger and more fascinating; first, their pulses quickened by a touch of humour, then their hearts laid under the subduing thrall of pathos; and he, the magician, with a heart, formed at once of the lyre of

Anacreon, and the harp of David, at his will and with infinite bliss to himself, uttering first the gay sentiment, of the lyre, and then the sad tones of the harp, in alternate spells; now gladdening all into glee, now melting all into sorrow, until they are rapt and lost in the delicious reverie. Never did any man possess such mastery in combining humour with pathos —blending smiles with tears. This power Burns exerted in conversation, with all the heightening of effect, which only the sudden coruscations of spoken words can impart. These conversations could never be remembered. No human memory could retain any thing so ethereal. It would be like daguerreotyping music, or the zephyrs of spring, or the odours of flowers, or the moonlight sleeping in the stream. All that could be remembered, was the bliss of the moment, when the flame was lighted on the altars of the hearts of his charmed auditors. Thus did the all-conquering eloquence of Burns lay a spell on the hearts of the highbred ladies of Edinburgh.

But it was not among mere scholars, and in the brilliant drawing-rooms of ladies alone, that Burns visited. He was invited into every circle. The conventional rules of social exclusiveness gave way before his genius. The lawyers, who were the most haughty and exclusive class in society, had him at their tables. "The lawyers of Edinburgh, (says Lockhart,) in whose wider circle Burns figured at his outset, with at least as much success as among the professional literati, were a very different race of men from these; they would neither, I take it, have pardoned rudeness, nor been alarmed at wit. But being in those days, with scarcely an exception, members of the landed aristocracy of the country, and forming, by far, the most influential body (as indeed they still do) in the society of Scotland, they were, perhaps, as proud a set of men as ever enjoyed the tranquil pleasure of unquestioned superiority. What their haughtiness, as a body was, may be guessed, when we know that inferior birth was reckoned a fair and legitimate ground

for excluding any man from the bar. In one remarkable instance, about this very time, a man of very extraordinary talents and accomplishments, was chiefly opposed in a long and painful struggle for admission, and in reality for no reasons but those I have been alluding to, by gentlemen, who, in the sequel, stood at the very head of the Whig party in Edinburgh; and the same aristocratical prejudice has, within the memory of the present generation, kept more persons of eminent qualifications in the background, for a season, than any English reader would easily believe. To this body belonged nineteen out of twenty of those 'patricians' whose stateliness Burns so long remembered, and so bitterly resented. It might, perhaps, have been well for him had stateliness been the worst fault of their manners. Wine-bibbing appears to be in most regions a favourite indulgence with those whose brains and lungs are subject to severe exercises of legal study and forensic practice. To this day, more traces of the old habits linger

about the inns of courts, than in any other sections of London. In Dublin and Edinburgh, the barristers are even now eminently convivial bodies of men; but among the Scotch lawyers of the line of barons, the principle of jollity was indeed in its high and palmy state. He partook largely in those tavern scenes of audacious hilarity, which then soothed, as a matter of course, the arid labours of the northern *noblesse de la robe*, (so they are well called in Red Gauntlet,) and of which we are favoured with a specimen in the 'High Jenks' chapter of Guy Mannering.

"The tavern-life is now-a-days nearly extinct, everywhere; but it was then in full vigour in Edinburgh, and there can be no doubt that Burns rapidly familiarized himself with it during his residence. He had, after all, tasted but rarely of such excesses while in Ayrshire."

We have now seen the manner in which Burns was received in Edinburgh. It may indeed be well called a triumphal reception. A monarch visiting his distant

dominions, would hardly have more real attention paid him. It is without parallel. Let us see how it all affected his own mind. We have seen what Dugald Stewart has said. And Burns's own letters to his friends written during this time, show clearly that he did not feel unduly elated by all this extraordinary attention. A few days after he arrived in the city, he thus writes to one of his neighbours, a good and wise man, for whom he had a great regard, John Ballantine, Esquire. "I would not write to you till I could have it in my power to give you some account of myself and matters, which, by the bye, is often no easy task. I arrived here on Tuesday was se'nnight, and have suffered ever since I came to town with a miserable headache, and stomach complaint, but am now a good deal better. I have found a worthy warm friend in Mr. Dalrymple, of Orangefield, who introduced me to Lord Glencairn, a man whose worth and brotherly kindness to me I shall remember when time shall be no more. By this

interest it passed in the 'Caledonian Hunt' and is entered in the books, that they are to take each a copy of the second edition, for which they are to pay one guinea. I have been introduced to a good many of the *noblesse*, but my avowed patrons and patronesses are the Duchess of Gordon, the Countess of Glencairn, with my Lord and Lady Betty Cunningham — the Dean of Faculty — Sir John Whiteford. I have likewise warm friends among the literati; Professors Stewart, Blair, and Mackenzie, the Man of Feeling. I am nearly agreed with Creech to print my book, and I suppose I will begin on Monday. I will send a subscription bill or two West post, when I intend writing my first kind patron, Mr. Aiken. I saw his son to day, and he is very well.

"Dugald Stewart, and some of my learned friends, put me in the periodical paper called 'The Lounger,' a copy of which I here inclose you. I was, sir, when I was first honoured with your notice, too obscure; now I tremble lest I should be

ruined by being dragged too suddenly into the glare of polite and learned observation."

Could a more simple, unpretending, sensible, and manly letter have been written; or one betokening more good feeling for his old friends, under the extraordinary circumstances in the midst of which a young man had been so suddenly placed? Burns was only twenty-seven years old when all these attentions were paid him; and yet with what composure and propriety did he receive them all. The glorification that he was undergoing had spread by report all over Scotland; and his most intelligent friends felt assured that he would be put beside himself. His friend, Mrs. Dunlop, a descendant of Sir William Wallace, a woman of talents, education, and piety, felt so much concerned for him, that she wrote to him upon his danger. Burns replied: "You are afraid I shall grow intoxicated with my prosperity as a poet; alas! madam, I know myself and the world too

well. I do not mean any airs of affected modesty; I am willing to believe that my abilities deserve some notice; but in a most enlightened, informed age and nation, when poetry is and has been the study of men of the first natural genius, aided with all the powers of polite learning, polite books and polite company,—to be dragged forth to the full glare of learned and polite observation, with all my imperfections of awkward rusticity, and crude, unpolished ideas on my head, I assure you, madam, I do not dissemble, when I tell you that I tremble for the consequences. The novelty of a poet in my obscure situation, without any of those advantages which are reckoned necessary for that character, at least at this time of day, has raised a partial tide of public notice, which has borne me to a height, where I am absolutely, feeling certain, my abilities are inadequate to support me; and too surely do I see that time when the same tide will leave me, and recede, perhaps, as far below the mark of truth. I do not say this in ridiculous af-

fectation of self-abasement and modesty. I have studied myself, and know what ground I occupy; and however a friend or the world may differ from me in that particular, I stand on my own opinion, in silent resolve, with all the tenaciousness of property. I mention this to you once for all, to disburthen my mind, and I do not wish to hear or say more about it. But,

'When proud fortune's ebbing tide recedes,'

you will bear me witness, that when my bubble of fame was at the highest, I stood unintoxicated, with the inebriating cup in my hand, looking forward with rueful resolve to the hastening time, when the blow of calumny should dash it to the ground, with all the eagerness of vengeful triumph."

As grave, calm, and utilitarian a philosopher as Dr. Franklin; if he had been witness of the scenes through which Burns passed, could not have more exactly appreciated, at their proper value, all the attentions extended to him, than Burns did

himself, or could have calculated more wisely the probabilities as to his ultimate situation in life, as is shown by this letter and many others written at the same time. In all his correspondence during this time, there is not a single expression of vainglory, or even of exaggeration, as to his fortunes, either present or prospective. The most singular calmness and propriety pervade all he wrote, as well as all he did in the presence of his admirers.

But it must not be supposed that the fires of ambition had been quenched, or even mitigated, in the bosom of Burns, by anything he saw in the walks of learned life. They burnt even more fiercely, than before he measured himself by the side of men of learning. In a letter written at this time to the Earl of Eglington, he says: "Fate had cast my station in the veriest shades of life; but never did a heart pant more ardently than mine to be distinguished, though, till very lately, I looked in vain on every side for a ray of light." And yet with all this ambition,

and standing on the proud elevation to which he had been so suddenly raised, he had the wisdom to see clearly the province in which he was constrained, by his lot in life, to exert his abilities. "The hope," says he, "to be admired for ages is, in by far the greater part of those even who are authors of repute, an unsubstantial dream. For my part, my first ambition was, and still my strongest wish is, to please my compeers, the rustic inmates of the hamlet, while ever-changing language and manners shall allow me to be relished and understood. I am very willing to admit that I have some poetical abilities; and as few, if any writers, either moral or poetical, are intimately acquainted with the classes of mankind among whom I have chiefly mingled, I may have seen men and manners in a different phasis from what is common, which may assist originality of thought." There can be no doubt, that this full appreciation of the necessity which hemmed in his talents, and confined his genius to poetry, was the condition on which his

fame depended. If he had striven to exert his abilities in some other walk of ambition, I cannot see how he could have succeeded so well, under his dire pecuniary necessities. The muses could be his companions in the midst of his most drudging avocations. There are few such instructive examples, as the determined perseverance with which Burns climbed the hill of fame.

But as ambitious as was Burns, yet amid all the glare of flattering attentions paid to him in Edinburgh, his generosity was not absorbed in egotism. With that diffusive kindness, and that appreciation of the truly noble in human conduct, which only the noble-minded can realize, he petitioned the Kirk of Cannongate, to permit him to erect a monument over the grave of the poet Fergusson. This is his petition:—

"To the honourable Bailies of Cannongate, Edinburgh. Gentlemen: I am sorry to be told that the remains of Robert Fergusson, the justly celebrated poet, a man, whose talents for ages to come will do honour to

our Caledonian name, lie in your church-yard, among the ignoble dead unnoticed and unknown.

"Some memorial to direct the steps of the lovers of Scottish song, when they wish to shed a tear over the 'narrow house' of the bard who is no more, is surely a tribute due to Fergusson's memory; a tribute I wish to have the honour of paying.

"I petition you, then, gentlemen, to permit me to lay a simple stone over his revered ashes, to remain an inaleniable property to his deathless fame." The petition was granted; and the stone was laid with this inscription upon it, by Burns:—

"No sculptured marble here, nor pompous lay,
No storied urn, nor animated bust;
This simple stone directs pale Scotia's way,
To pour her sorrows o'er her poet's dust."

Burns was now meditating a return to his home. He had been in Edinburgh more than five months. His poems had just issued from the press, and were circulated by the booksellers all over Great

Britain, and even to the American Colonies. And everywhere they meet with a ready welcome. In England they were nearly as much praised as in Scotland. On the 22nd of March, 1787, Burns had written to his friend, Mrs. Dunlop:—"Scottish scenes and Scottish story are the themes I could wish to sing. I have no dearer aim than to have it in my power, unplagued with the routine of business, for which heaven knows I am unfit enough, to make leisurely pilgrimages through Caledonia; to sit on the fields of her battles; to wander on the romantic banks of her rivers; and to muse by the stately towers or venerable ruins, once the honoured abodes of her heroes.

"But these are Utopian thoughts: I have dallied long enough with life; 'tis time to be in earnest. I have a fond, an aged mother to care for: and some other bosom ties perhaps equally tender. When the individual only suffers by the consequences of his own thoughtlessness, indolence or folly, he may not be censurable;

nay, shining abilities, and some of the nobler virtues, may half sanctify a heedless character: but where God and nature have intrusted the welfare of others to his care; where the trust is sacred, and the ties are dear, that man must be far gone in selfishness, or strangely lost to reflection, whom these connexions will not rouse to exertion."

With these noble sentiments and generous filial resolves, did Burns contemplate leaving Edinburgh. And now that the time arrived when he could return home, he determined to make first one of those pilgrimages through Caledonia, which he so much desired. Having made an arrangement to be accompanied by Robert Ainslie, a young gentleman of talents and education, he resolved to make a border tour. So, on the 3rd of May, 1787, he addressed this note to Professor Blair:—

"I leave Edinburgh to-morrow morning, but could not go without troubling you with half a line, sincerely to thank you for the kindness, patronage, and friendship

you have shown me. I often felt the embarrassment of my singular situation; drawn forth from the veriest shades of life to the glare of remark; and honoured by the notice of those illustrious names of my country, whose works, while they are applauded to the end of time, will ever instruct and mend the heart. However the meteor-like novelty of my appearance in the world might attract notice, and honour me with the acquaintance of the permanent lights of genius and literature, those who are truly benefactors of the immortal nature of man, I knew very well that my utmost merit was far unequal to the task of preserving that character when once the novelty was over; I have made up my mind that abuse, or almost even neglect, will not surprise me in my quarters." The next morning Dr. Blair answered the letter:—

"I was favoured this forenoon with your very obliging letter, together with an impression of your portrait, for which I return you my best thanks. The success

you have met with I do not think was beyond your merit; and if I had any small hand in contributing to it, it gives me great pleasure. I know no way in which literary persons who are advanced in years can do more service to the world, than in forwarding the efforts of rising genius, or bringing forth unknown merit from obscurity.

"Your situation, as you say, was indeed very singular: and in being brought out, all at once, from the shades of deepest privacy to so great a share of public notice and observation, you had to stand a severe trial. I am happy that you have stood it so well; and as far as I have known or heard, though in the midst of many temptations, without reproach to your character and behaviour.

"As you very properly hint yourself, you are not to be surprised if in your rural retreat, you do not find yourself surrounded with that glare of notice and applause which here shone upon you. No man can be a good poet, without being something of

a philosopher. He must lay his account, that any one who exposes himself to public observation, will occasionally meet with the attacks of illiberal censure, which it is always best to overlook and despise."

Having bid adieu to Edinburgh, Burns and Robert Ainslie directed their course by Lammermoor. Burns was now again in his glory, contemplating the beauties and sublimities of nature. For, let him look where he might, whether in the sky, the earth, or the sea, it was given him to behold the power of the Creator working for beauty and for glory. And he had the master faculty to seize in the grasp of his intellect, all that he saw of beauty and of glory, and to proclaim it to his fellow-men in the inventive mysteries of poetry. And he was happy, gloriously happy, whether he was pencilling the "Daisy" in the poetic hues of moral sentiment, or was pouring forth the wild reveries of "Tam o' Shanter," or the thunder-breathing war-song of "Robert Bruce," from the ever-teeming abundance of his deep and various soul.

He was one of nature's prophets, appointed by the Creator to dwell and walk, and wander, and feast with ever increasing delight on the multitudinous beauties and glories of creation, and embodying them in the electric diction of poetry, to pour them in a tide of fire into the hearts of duller mortals, until they feel that melody of the heart, that rapture of the soul, which it is the prerogative of genius to inspire, as well as a duty imposed upon it by the Creator, in lifting the mass of men from earth towards heaven. Every thing in nature spoke to the heart of Burns, and tuned a responsive string. Wherever he saw beauty, he felt it, and loved it, and realized its heavenly nature in its joyous sweetness. With these high prerogatives was Burns now exploring the domains of nature, making his journey "a feast of reason and a flow of soul." He kept a journal of his tour, and and noted down both persons and things with a free hand.

On the 6th of May, Burns and young Ainslie arrived at Berrywell, the residence

of the father of the latter. Sunday, Burns accompanied Miss Ainslie to church. The preacher selected a text denouncing sinners. In the course of the sermon, Burns observing Miss Ainslie turning over the leaves of her Bible to find the text, took a slip of paper from his pocket, and pencilled these lines, and presented them to her :—

"Fair maid, you need not take the hint,
Nor idle texts pursue,
'Twas guilty sinners that he meant,
Not angels such as you."

Next day, they pursued their journey towards the Tweed. "When we arrived at Coldstream, (says Ainslie,) where the dividing line between Scotland and England is the Tweed, I suggested our going across to the other side of the river by the Coldstream bridge, that Burns might have it to say, he had been in England. We did so, and were pacing slowly along on English ground, enjoying our walk, when I was astonished to see the poet throw away his hat, and thus uncovered, look towards

Scotland, kneeling down with uplifted hands, and apparently in a state of great enthusiasm. I kept silence, uncertain what was next to be done, when Burns, with extreme emotion, and, an expression of countenance which I will never forget, prayed for, and blessed Scotland most solemnly, by pronouncing aloud the two concluding verses of the 'Cotter's Saturday Night.'"

At Jedburgh, Burns dined with a Captain Rutherford, who had been a prisoner for many years among the Indians of America. In his Journal is the following: "The Captain, a polite fellow, fond of money in his farming way, showed a particular respect for my bardship—his lady a proper matrimonial second part of him. Miss Rutherford, a beautiful girl, but too much of a woman to expose so much of a fine swelling bosom—her face very fine." The last sentence shows the delicate moral sensibility of Burns, it being the secret thought of his heart, privately recorded. While at Jedburgh, Burns was

waited upon by the magistrates, and handsomely presented with the freedom of the town. And at Eyemouth, he was made a Royal Arch Mason of St. Abb's Lodge. Thus runs the brotherly record: "On account of R. Burns's remarkable poetical genius, the Encampment unanimously agreed to admit him gratis, and considered themselves honoured by having a man of such shining abilities for one of their companions." Thus, everywhere were honours paid to Burns. Thus was he realizing the truth which he afterwards so happily expressed:—

"The rank is but the guinea stamp,
The man's the gowd for a' that!"

On the 27th of May, Burns crossed the Tweed, and the 8th of June, after six months' absence, he reached Mossgiel. His mother met him with the simple exclamation, "Oh, Robert!" But that implied everything. Her mind had not words for her heart. How could a simple peasant woman express her feelings to-

wards such a son? And what his feelings were towards his mother, may be inferred from the noble sentiments expressed about her, before he left Edinburgh, while he was yet standing on the heights of fame, in the view of all the aristocrcay of birth, of wealth, and of learning. He still remembered and honoured his aged and humble mother. This became a man; and Robert Burns could do nothing else.

Burns remained at home but two weeks. He went out but little: was restless, being still without any settled aim in life. His position, too, in society was unpleasant. His neighbours felt reserved in his presence, now he had become, what they did not before know, a great man. His feelings are portrayed in a letter written at this time to Mr. Nicol, master of the High School of Edinburgh. "I never, my friend, thought mankind very capable of anything generous: but the stateliness of the patrician families in Edinburgh, and the servility of my plebeian brethren, (who perhaps formerly eyed me askance,) since I returned

home, have nearly put me out of conceit of my species. I have bought a pocket Milton, which I carry perpetually about me, in order to study the sentiments, the dauntless magnanimity, the intrepid, unyielding independence, the desperate daring, and noble defiance of hardship, in that great personage, Satan." Burns plainly saw that his fortune was to be a hard one. That he was in a great measure cut off from the sympathies of both the higher and lower classes of society. So his brave soul was hardening itself for the conflict. He was not a man to quail before difficulties. It must not, however, be supposed, that he was like Satan, preparing to war against the right. He explains his meaning in a letter written several months afterwards:—

"My favourite feature in Milton's Satan is his manly fortitude, in supporting what cannot be remedied. I meant no more, by saying he was a favourite hero of mine." Burns was therefore merely strengthening his fortitude, by studying the character of Satan. But how perilous is the situation

of a man who has to resort to such aids to sustain his sinking heart. It is through these private utterances that we can see into the griefs of the human spirit. And what a commentary is this upon the fleeting influence for happiness of human adulation! The very poles of the social world seemed just now to be throwing up auroras of glory for his fame. Not a cloud of the future but what seemed gilded with a bow of promise to animate his hopes. And now, such heavy darkness benights him, that he feels abandoned of his fellow-men, and like one without hope, he even catches a sympathy to sustain him from the great exile to perdition.

But Burns was not the man to remain in a wrong position long. His elastic spirit bounded above the difficulties of the present, and cast its anticipations upon the hopeful promises of the future. He determined to travel over the Highlands, in order to catch inspiration, both from natural scenery, and from the historic associations of particular places, and pour forth the awakened

thoughts in song. During the summer of 1787, he made three different tours, one of them as far as six hundred miles on horseback. On the battle field of Bannockburn, he made this memorandum in his journal: "The field of Bannockburn—the hole where glorious Bruce set his standard. Here no Scot can pass uninterested. I fancy to myself, that I see my gallant, heroic countrymen coming over the hills, and down upon the plunderers of their country, the murderers of their fathers; noble revenge and just hate glowing in every vein, striving more and more eagerly as they approach the oppressive, insulting, blood-thirsting foe! I see them meet in glorious, triumphant congratulation on the victorious field, exulting in their heroic, royal leader, and rescued liberty and independence!" We see in this, the poet's heart teeming in too great abundance for utterance. All the floodgates of his feelings are lifted, and the mingling tides are rolling together in conscious confusion. But the inspiration caught upon the field of the

conflict, was afterwards poured forth in a voice of thunder, in that grand war-ode—the noblest war-song known to the world—the most perfect utterance of a nation's heart in the hour of a great battle with a powerful invading foe, that has ever been spoken to the ear of universal man.

Burns visited the seat of the Duke of Athole; and while there, strolled on the banks of Bruar Water. The stream, though presenting imposing scenery, was destitute of trees. When Burns returned home, he wrote "The Humble Petition of Bruar Water" to the Duke, begging him to plant its banks with trees. The Duke complied with the request; and now a beautiful forest shades its banks, realizing the foreshadowed promises of the poem:—

"Would then my noblest master please
To grant my highest wishes,
He'll shade my banks wi' tow'ring trees,
And bonnie spreading bushes;
Delighted doubly then, my lord,
You'll wander on my banks,
And listen mony a grateful bird
Return you tuneful thanks.

The sober lav'rock, warbling wild,
Shall to the skies aspire;
The gowdspink, Music's gayest child,
Shall sweetly join the choir;
The blackbird strong, the lintwhite clear,
The mavis mild and mellow;
The robin, pensive autumn cheer,
In all her locks of yellow."

Thus did Burns find material for poetry in everything. Bruar Water is made a classic stream for ever.

On the 16th September, 1787, Burns arrived at Edinburgh; and, on the next day, wrote to his brother Gilbert:—"I arrived here safe yesterday evening after a tour of twenty-two days, and travelling near six hundred miles, windings included. My farthest stretch was about ten miles beyond Inverness. I went through the heart of the Highlands by Crieff, Taymouth, the famous seat of Lord Breadalbane, down the Tay, among cascades and Druidical circles of stones, to Dunkeld, a seat of the Duke of Athole; thence across Tay, and up one of his tributary streams, to Blair of Athole,

another of the Duke's seats, where I had the honour of spending near two days with his Grace and family; thence many miles through a wild country, among cliffs grey with eternal snows and gloomy savage glens, till I crossed Spay, and went down the stream through Strathspey, so famous in Scottish music; Badenoch, &c., till I reached Grant Castle, where I spent half a day with Sir James Grant and family; and then crossed the country to Fort George, but called by the way at Cawdor, the ancient seat of Macbeth; there I saw the identical bed in which tradition says Duncan was murdered: lastly, from Fort George to Inverness.

"I returned by the coast, through Nain, Forres, and so on, to Aberdeen, thence to Stonehive, where James Burness from Montrose, met me by appointment. I spent two days among our relations, and found our aunts, Jean and Isabel, still alive, and hale old women. John Cairn, though born the same year with our father, walks as vigorously as I can—they have had

several letters from his son in New York. The rest of my stages are not worth rehearsing: warm as I was from Ossian's country, where I had seen his grave, what cared I for fish-towns or fertile carses? I slept at the famous Brodie of Brodie's one night, and dined at Gordon Castle next day, with the Duke, Duchess and family."

What an excellent narrative this is, so much in a few words! Burns intended to tarry at Castle Gordon: but Nicol of the High School of Edinburgh, his travelling companion, took offence at something, and insisted on continued .his journey, and Burns would not let him go alone. This was unfortunate for Burns; for the Duchess of Gordon had invited Henry Addington, afterwards Viscount Sidmouth, to meet him there, with a view, it is said, through him, to enlist the ministry of Pitt in his behalf. Addington thought Burns almost a rival of Shakspeare, and had said so, to Pitt and Melville. Burns, some time afterwards, in a letter thus facetiously alludes to the unlucky event:—"I shall certainly

among my legacies, leave my latent curse on that unlucky predicament which hurried, —tore me away from Castle Gordon May that obstinate son of Latin prose (Nicol) be curst to Scottish mile periods; and damned to seven-league paragraphs; while Declension, and Congugation, Gender, Number and Time, under the ragged banner of Dissonance and Disarrangement, eternally rank against him in hostile arrray!"

Burns was now for the second time in Edinburgh. He had come to settle with Creech, his bookseller. Creech had distant correspondents to consult, and many accounts to settle. On that account Burns was detained in the city until the 13th of April, 1788. He had, too, been upset in a coach, and had injured one of his knees so much as to confine him for a long time. In a letter at this time, to Miss Chalmers, a beautiful young lady with whom, in his tours, he had become acquainted, he mentions his unsettled state of mind; and says: "There are just two creatures that I would

envy,—a horse in his wild state traversing the forests of Asia, or an oyster on some of the desert shores of Europe. The one has not a wish without enjoyment, the other has neither wish nor fear." With what power does this depict the state of his heart? It is an illustration of unsurpassed beauty, and lays open the heart right naked before us.

During this visit to Edinburgh, Burns became acquainted with a lady, between whom and himself there grew up a perilous attachment. One evening, at a Miss Nimmo's, he met with a lady whom he supposed to be a widow. She was born the same year with himself, was beautiful, of most fascinating manners, very bewitching in conversation, and altogether very much such a woman as Burns was a man. She had been delighted with his poetry, was extremely desirous to see him; and yet during his stay in Edinburgh the winter before, she never had an opportunity. She was, as might well be anticipated, very much fascinated by Burns, and he no

less charmed by her. He was invited to take tea with her the next evening; but his knee had become so sore that he was prevented. In his note of apology he expressed himself thus:—"I never met with a person in my life whom I more anxiously wished to meet again than yourself." The lady, in reply, wrote a kind note, and asked, "Do you remember that she whom you address is a married woman?" To this Burns said, in another note, "Paying addresses to a married woman! I started, as if I had seen the ghost of him I had injured." The lady was a Mrs. McElhose, formerly a Miss Craig, cousin of Lord Craig, and niece of Collin McLaurin, the celebrated mathematician and friend of Newton. Her father was a physician of Glasgow. Her mother had died when she was a child. She was to be sent by her father to boarding-school at Edinburgh; and a young Mr. McElhose hearing when she was to go, hired all the seats in the stage but the one taken for her, that he might accompany

her alone. He had no acquaintance with her, but had been attracted by her in the streets of Glasgow, and took this mode of becoming acquainted. She was only fifteen years old, and was called the Glasgow Beauty. When she returned from school, McElhose renewed his attentions, and being a man of handsome person and fascinating manners, he won her young heart. Her father objected to the intimacy. They were married when she was only seventeen years of age. After living together only four years, she determined to leave his house, on account of his jealous and brutal disposition. She and her two sons found an affectionate welcome under her father's roof. Her father soon after died, leaving her a small estate. In order, unprotected as she now was, to be out of the way of her husband, she removed to Edinburgh, to be near Lord Craig, her cousin. Her husband soon removed to the West Indies. Mrs. McElhose, on account of her youth, her beauty, her genius, her sweet disposition, and generous character,

and the tenderness which her misfortunes had thrown over the whole, had won for her the most affectionate solicitude for her welfare in the society of Edinburgh. She had been living in Edinburgh for several years. Under these circumstances she and Burns met. Both were attracted. At first, however, it was a mere pleasing fancy which attracted them to each other. But as Burns was pleased with her note in answer to his apology, he replied in a sprightly style, and as he was confined, and likely to be so for some time, she rejoined. In this way a correspondence grew up between them, in the course of which he adopted the signature of "Sylander," and she of "Clarinda." After Burns was well enough to visit, they still corresponded, as it was not thought prudent for him to visit very often. In this way did these two high souls become peculiarly interested in each other. In the letters of Clarinda there are some beautiful passages, showing her to be a woman of high sentiment, and deeply tried in her best affections. When

Burns was about to leave Edinburgh, she wrote him a letter, in which she says: "Sylvander, I believe our friendship will be lasting; its basis has been virtue, similarity of tastes, feelings and sentiments. Alas! I shudder at the idea of an hundred miles' distance. You'll hardly write once a month, and other objects will weaken your affection for Clarinda. Yet I cannot believe so. Oh, let the scenes of nature remind you of Clarinda! In winter, remember the dark shades of her fate; in summer, the warmth, the cordial warmth of her friendship; in autumn, her glowing wishes to bestow plenty on all; and let spring animate you with hopes that your friend may yet live to surmount the wintry blasts of life, and revive to taste a springtime of happiness! At all events, Sylvander, the storms of life will quickly pass, and 'one unbounded spring encircle all.' There, Sylvander, we will quickly meet. *Love* there is not a crime. I charge you to meet me there. Oh God! I must lay down my pen."

Some of Burns's most beautiful songs were addressed to this lady; and to his death he had for her the most affectionate friendship. She died only a few years ago, greatly respected; and since her death, her correspondence with Burns has been published. This, to Burns, was one of the most pleasing episodes in his life. But then, to both it was also a source of much pain.

"Dearly bought, the hidden treasure,
Finer feelings can bestow;
Chords that vibrate sweetest pleasure,
Thrill the deepest notes of woe."

While Burns was in Edinburgh, Johnson began his "Musical Museum," for the purpose of collecting all the Scottish songs set to their proper tunes, and to procure new songs for the tunes, where the old ones were vulgar or indelicate. Johnson asked the assistance of Burns, and he at once entered into the project with his whole heart. He wrote to his friends in every quarter of the country, for airs and verses

for the Museum; and during the winter he composed thirty original ones.

Having settled with his bookseller, Burns realized, after deducting all his expenses in Edinburgh, about four hundred pounds. He now determined to settle himself in life. Through the instrumentality of friends, he procured a place with an income of thirty-five pounds a year, in the excise. On the 13th of April, 1788, he left Edinburgh, and returned home with the purpose of renting a farm, which, with his office, he thought would enable him to live. Thus ends the second stage in the life of Burns. A new era now opens upon him.

Some years after the death of Mary Campbell, Burns had placed his affections upon Jean Armour, the daughter of a respectable peasant. She seems to have been the woman who, next to Mary Campbell, made the deepest impression upon his heart. And she loved him devotedly. Mr. Armour, the father, had taken up an extravagant prejudice against Burns, and endeavoured to break the attachment. The

young couple met secretly, and had a private marriage, by a contract in writing. The fact of their marriage soon manifested itself in an unmistakable manner; and the father, with a mad obstinacy, made his daughter destroy the marriage lines, and thereby degraded her from a wife to a position, which her subsequent life proved to be unjust, cruel, and tyranical. It is to this that Burns alludes in his autobiography, when he says, "This is the unfortunate story that gave rise to my printed poem, 'The Lament.' This was a most melancholy affair, which I cannot yet bear to reflect on, and had very nearly given me one or two of the principal qualifications for a place among those who have lost the chart, and mistaken the reckoning of rationality." Burns was greatly incensed at Jean Armour for yielding to the dictation of her father, and had determined to go to the West Indies, when he was called, as we have seen, to Edinburgh. During all the time Burns was in Edinburgh, he considered himself as entirely released from all obligation to Jean Armour; as she

had deserted him in obedience to her father. But notwithstanding all this, after he had been in Edinburgh two months of his first visit, he says, in a letter to Gavin Hamilton, "To tell the truth among friends, I feel a miserable blank in my heart from the want of her." The eclat which Burns had received, did not make him forget her whom he had placed in the most irretrievable of all situations. He therefore determined to open anew his intercourse with her. In April, 1788, they were married in the forms of law. Soon afterwards, he thus writes to his friend, Mrs. Dunlop:—"Your surmise, madam, is just; I am a husband. I found a once much-loved, and still much-loved female, literally and truly cast out to the mercy of the naked elements; but I enabled her to *purchase* a shelter:—there is no sporting with a fellow-creature's happiness or misery. The most placid good-nature and sweetness of disposition; a warm heart, gratefully devoted with all its powers to love me; vigorous health, and sprightly cheerfulness, set off to the best advantage

by a more than commonly handsome figure; these I think, in a woman, may make a good wife, though she should never have read a page but in the Scriptures, nor have danced in a brighter assembly than a penny-pay wedding. You are right, that a bachelor state would have assured me more friends; but, from a cause you will easily guess, conscious peace in the enjoyment of my own mind, and unmistrusting confidence in approaching my God, would seldom have been of the number." In this and other letters written at the same time, we have the expression of the noble motives which actuated Burns in the union of his fortunes with those of Jean Armour.

Burns now rented a farm in Nithsdale, called Ellisland. The farm was beautifully situated on the river Nith, about six miles from Dumfries. The society in the neighbourhood was fit, in point of information and refinement, for any man in Scotland. Mrs. Burns did not go to Ellisland for some time, as the farm was not fit for her reception. The houses had to be rebuilt. In

the meantime, Burns dwelt in a hut. In his common-place book is this memorandum:—"Ellisland, Sunday, 14th June, 1788. This is now the third day that I have been in this country. 'Lord, what is man?' What a bustling little bundle of passions, appetites, ideas, and fancies! And what a capricious kind of existence he has here! I am such a coward in life, so tired of the service, that I could almost at any time, with Milton's Adam, gladly lay me in my mother's lap, and be at peace. But a wife and children bind me to struggle with the stream, till some sudden squall shall overset the silly vessel, or in the listless return of years, its own craziness reduce it to a wreck. Farewell now to those giddy follies, those varnished vices, which, though half-sanctified by the bewitching levity of wit and humour, are at best but thriftless idling with the precious current of existence; nay, often poisoning the whole, that, like the plains of Jericho, *the water is naught, and the ground barren*, and no-

thing short of a supernaturally-gifted Elisha can after heal the evils.

"Wedlock, the circumstance that buckles me hardest to care, if virtue and religion were to be any thing with me but names, was what, in a few seasons, I must have resolved on; in my present situation it was absolutely necessary. Humanity, generosity, honest pride of character, justice to my own happiness for after life, so far as it could depend (which it surely will a great deal) on internal peace; all these joined their warmest suffrages, their most powerful solicitations, with a rooted attachment, to urge the step I have taken. Nor have I any reason on *her* part to repent. I can fancy how, but I have never seen where, I could make a better choice. Come, then, let me act up to my favourite motto, that glorious passage in Young,—

> 'On reason build resolve,
> That column of true majesty in man!'"

With these reflections, did Burns enter upon his new career. From the 11th of

June until the first week in December, Mrs. Burns was at Mauchline, forty-six miles distant from Ellisland. Burns frequently visited her. But can one well see how a man who had been so feted at Edinburgh, could help indulging in gloomy forebodings, situated as Burns now was, away from his wife, and living in a house which he thus describes:—"The hovel which I shelter in is pervious to every blast that blows, and every shower that falls; and I am only preserved from being chilled to death by being suffocated with smoke." It cannot be questioned, that Burns, while in Edinburgh, had hoped to occupy a higher walk in life, and have ampler scope for his ambition. It is wonderful, then, with what manfulness he united his fortunes with the woman who had put her destiny into his hands, while he was humble like herself, and deliberately and perseveringly accommodated himself to a walk in life in which she could with propriety be his wife. And amidst it all he never for a moment loses

the sense of his own greatness as a man, but ever keeps in view his high vocation as a poet. About this time he talked of visiting Mrs. Dunlop, but she said she feared it would interfere with his business. To this he replied that it would not.—"But be that as it may, the heart of the man and the fancy of the poet, are the two grand considerations for which I live: if miry ridges, and dirty dunghills, are to engross the best part of the functions of my soul immortal, I had better been a rook or a magpie at once, and then I should not have been plagued with any ideas superior to breaking of clods, and picking up grubs; not to mention barn-door cocks or mallards, creatures with which I could almost exchange lives any time. And a few months after this, he writes to Bishop Giddes:—"I am, if possible, more than ever an enthusiast to the muses. I am determined to study man and nature, and in that view incessantly; and try if the ripening and corrections of years can enable me to produce something worth preserving—some large

poetic plans that are floating in my imagination, or partly put in execution, I shall impart to you when I have the pleasure of meeting with you." Such were the sentiments and high purposes of Burns, though cultivating an unproductive farm, at a high rent, and riding two hundred miles a week, gauging barrels, and searching out smugglers. And during all the time he lived on this farm, he continued to write for Johnson's Musical Museum, his incomparable songs. He wrote at this time his "Mary in Heaven," and that greatest of all his productions, as he himself thought, "Tam o' Shanter." It is hardly to be believed, that he could produce so many songs; for they are a peculiarly difficult species of composition. "The mob of mankind, that many-headed monster, (says Burns,) would laugh at so serious a speech, about an old song: but as Job says, 'O that mine adversary had written a book!' Those who think that composing a Scotch song is a trifling business, let them try!" Most of the songs produced at this time were com-

posed as Burns rode over the hills and vales on his excise excursions. "Nor do I find (says he) my hurried life greatly inimical to my correspondence with the muses. Their visits to me, indeed, and I believe to most of their acquaintances, like the visits of good angels, are short and far between; but I meet them now and then, as I jog through the hills of Nithsdale, just as I used to do, on the banks of Ayr."

The chief aim of Burns now, as it had ever been, was to cultivate his own mind, and to elevate that of his fellow-men. While living near Tarbolton and Mauchline, he established reading and debating clubs in both places, and was president of both of them. And now, while at Ellisland, he established a parochial library; of which he was treasurer, librarian and censor. He made the selection of all the books, and his letters to the booksellers show the excellence of his choice. Such libraries are now common in the rural districts of southern Scotland: but Burns was amongst the first, if not the first, to estab-

lish them. What a service has he rendered to his country by these various efforts to diffuse knowledge among his fellow-men. It must not be supposed, that it is only through his poetry, that he has produced an impression on his country.

Burns still continued his intercourse with the literati of Edinburgh. He made one visit to that city in the winter of 1789-90; and as we have seen, Dugald Stewart says, he "never saw him more agreeable nor more interesting," than he was the evening he spent with him in company with Alison, the author of the celebrated Essay on Taste. After Burns returned home, Alison sent him a copy of his work, and requested his opinion of it. There is not, in the most transcendental walks of metaphysics, a more subtle problem, than that of the theory of taste. Nor has any one much oftener engaged the attention of philosophers. And it baffled all from Plato to Alison. But Alison has thrown more light upon the subject than all others put together. His work in every respect is a

master piece of philosophical speculation. It in my judgement holds the same place in æsthetics, that Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding does in mental philosophy. Let us see then, how Burns disposes of such a work! In a letter dated Ellisland, 14th February, 1791, he says:—"You must by this time have set me down as one of the most ungrateful of men. You did me the honour to present me with a book, which does honour to science and the intellectual powers of men, and I have not even so much as acknowledged the receipt of it. The fact is, you yourself are to blame for it. Flattered as I was by your telling me that you wished my opinion of the work, the old spiritual enemy of mankind, who knows well that vanity is one of the sins that most easily beset me, put it into my head to ponder over the performance with the look-out of a critic, and to draw up, forsooth, a deep, learned digest of strictures on a composition, of which in fact, until I read your book, I did not even

know the first principles. I own, sir, that at first glance, several of your propositions startled me as paradoxical. That the martial clangor of a trumpet had something in it vastly more grand, heroic, and sublime, than the twingle-twangle of a Jews' harp; that the delicate flexure of a rose-twig, when the half-blown flower is heavy with the tears of the dawn, was infinitely more beautiful and elegant than the upright stub of a burdock; and that from something innate and independent of all associations of ideas; these I had set down as irrefragable, orthodox truths, until reading your book shook my faith. In short, sir, except Euclid's Elements of Geometry, which I made a shift to unravel by my father's fireside, in the winter evenings of the first season I held the plough, I never read a book which gave me such a quantum of information, and added so much to my stock of ideas, as your 'Essays on the Principles of Taste.' One thing, sir, you must forgive my mentioning as an uncommon

merit, in the work, I mean the language. To clothe abstract philosophy in elegance of style, sounds something like a contradiction in terms; but you have convinced me that they are quite compatible." Of all the criticisms that have been written upon the work of Alison, from Lord Jeffrey's celebrated article in the Edinburgh Review, down, nothing in so small a space, near as good, has appeared, as this letter of Burns. Not Dugald Stewart himself, though he has written upon the theory of taste, could have written a more appropriate letter in all particulars. The subject is approached with the ease and confidence of one trained in such speculations. Burns deals with the whole subject with a facetious courtesy; and with one illustration, brings out the whole pith and point of the theory, with a sublimity and a beauty, that makes all the illustrations even of Jeffrey, so great a master as he is, sink in the comparison. I do not hesitate to declare, that the whole history of philosophical criticism, cannot

furnish an illustration of a subtile theory superior to it in all the ends for which illustrations are used. The celebrated illustration of Kant in his "Critic of Pure Reason," where he compares the human reason striving to pass the limits of experience, to a dove endeavouring to fly in a vacuum, though the most beautiful illustration of a metaphysical subtilty I can recollect, is not superior to it, either for appositeness or beauty. "The buoyant dove, (says Kant,) when, with free wing, it traverses the air of which it feels the resistance, might imagine that it would fly still better in the vacuum beyond; and thus Plato forgets and looks slightingly on the sensible world, because it imposes upon his reason such narrow limitations, and so he ventures himself on the wing of his ideas, into the empty space of the pure understanding." When Dugald Stewart read this letter of Burns, he was surprised "at the distinct conception he appeared from it to have formed of the general principles of the doctrine of association."

But I cannot see why he should have been surprised after having expressed such an exalted opinion of Burns's mind, as he did after seeing him so often. "It is amusing enough (says Lockhart) to trace the lingering reluctance of some of these polished scholars; about admitting even to themselves, in his absence, what it is certain they all felt sufficiently when they were actually in his presence. The extraordinary resources Burns displayed in conversation, —the strong vigorous sagacity of his observations on life and manners,—the splendour of his wit, and the glowing energy of his eloquence when his feelings were stirred, made him the object of serious admiration among those practised masters of the art of *talk;* that galaxy of eminent men of letters, who, in their various departments, shed lustre at that period on the name of Scotland." The truth is, that Burns from his youth, when he read Locke, had been fond of metaphysical speculations. And many of his most familiar letters abound in the sublimest speculations. In fact, in a letter

to Mrs. Dunlop, written more than two years before the one to Alison, he indulges in speculations near akin to those of the "Essay on Talk." "We know nothing (says he) or next to nothing, of the substance or structure of our souls, so cannot account for those seeming caprices in them that one should be particularly pleased with this thing, or struck with that, which, on minds of a different cast, makes no extraordinary impression. I have some favourite flowers in spring, among which are the mountain-daisy, the hare-bell, the fox-glove, the wild brier-rose, the budding birch, and the hoary hawthorn, that I view and hang over with particular delight. I never heard the loud, solitary whistle of the curfew in a summer noon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of gray plovers in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry. Tell me, my dear friend, to what can this be owing? Are we a piece of machinery, which, like the Æolian harp, passive, takes the impression of the passing

accident? Or, do these workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to such proofs of those awful and important realities,—a God that made all things,—a man's immaterial and immortal nature,—and a world of weal or woe beyond death and the grave." And it is quite clear that Burns was familiar with the philosophy of Scotland. This is shown incidentally in his familiar writings. In one of his epistles in verse, to James Tait, accompanying the works of Smith and Reid, which he sent him to read, we find the following lines:—

> "I've sent you here, by Johnnie Tinson,
> Twa sage philosophers to glimpse on!
> Smith wi' his sympathetic feeling,
> An' Reid to common sense appealing.
> Philosophers have fought and wrangled,
> An' meikle Greek an' Latin mangled,
> Till wi' their logic-jargon tir'd,
> An' in the depth of science mir'd,
> To common sense they now appeal,
> What wives and wabsters see and feel."

With what an easy familiarity are the main

doctrines of Smith and Reid exhibited! And with what admirable satire does he ridicule the doctrines which pretend to be based on a refined logic. And it is all done with that condensed force of style so peculiarly characteristic of Burns's productions. And I fully believe, with Dugald Stewart, that Burns was "fitted to excel in whatever walk of ambition he had chosen to exert his abilities."

It is certainly very remarkable that Burns, amidst his laborious avocations, should find time to read such works as "Alison on Taste," indulge in such speculations as we have just considered, write innumerable songs, and produce "Tam o' Shanter," in the two years he had been at Ellisland. But this is but a small part of his mental operations. He was at this very time projecting poems of a higher order than any he had yet produced. He was planning a great national drama, in which the various fortunes of the gallant Bruce were to be exhibited. "Those who recollect (says Walter Scott) the masculine and

lofty tone of martial spirit which glows in the poem of Bannockburn, will sigh to think what the character of the gallant Bruce might have proved under the hands of Burns." With a view to prepare himself for the task, on the 2nd of March, 1790, he writes to his bookseller:—"I want likewise for myself, as you can pick them up, second-handed, or cheap copies of Otway's dramatic works, Cibber's, or any dramatic works of the more modern, Macklin, Garrick, Foote, Colman, or Sheridan. A good copy too of Moliere, in French, I much want. Any other good dramatic authors in that language, I want also; but comic authors chiefly, though I should wish to have Racine, Corneille, and Voltaire too." And only a month before this, he had written to the same bookseller:—"I will not say one word about apologies or excuses for not writing. I am a poor, rascally gauger, compelled to gallop at at least two hundred miles every week to inspect dirty ponds and yeasty barrels, and when can I find time to write? I want

Smollett's works for the sake of his incomparable humour. I have already Roderick Random, and Humphrey Clinker; Peregrine Pickle, Launcelot Greaves, Ferdinand Count Fathom, I still want; but as I said, the veriest copies will serve me. I am nice only in the appearance of my poets. I forgot the price of Cowper's Poems, but I believe I must have them." What intense mental activity does all this indicate. It seems incredible that Burns could read as much as this demand of such an array of books implies. What a commentary, instructive as it is stringent, on the laziness of most men! But ambition, with high aims, will enable a man to accomplish anything but impossibilities.

In this year, 1791, Burns experienced a great affliction in the loss of his first patron, the Earl of Glencairn. It was, as we have seen, in a great degree, through the patronage of this generous nobleman, that Burns succeeded so well with the first Edinburgh edition of his poems. And Burns then declared, and on all occasions afterwards,

that as long as a pulse beat in his heart, he would be grateful to the Earl of Glencairn. And on his second visit to Edinburgh, to settle with his bookseller, the Earl again aided him, which Burns thus notices:—"The noble Earl of Glencairn took me by the hand to-day, and interested himself in my concerns, with a goodness like that benevolent Being whose image he so richly bears. He is a stronger proof of the immortality of the soul than any that philosophy ever produced. A mind like his can never die." What a noble compliment is this! The grandest ever paid to any man. I glory in recording it, no less on account of the noble heart that conceived it, than for the purpose of eliciting the praise of every reader of these pages for the Earl of Glencairn.

When the Earl died, Burns wrote to his steward to know when the interment would take place. "God knows," says he, "what I have suffered, at the loss of my best friend, my first and dearest patron and benefactor, the man to whom I owe all that

I am and have. I am going into mourning for him, and with more sincerity of grief than I fear some will, who by nature's ties ought to feel on this occasion.

"Dare I trouble you to let me know privately, before the day of interment, that I may cross the country and steal among the crowd, to pay a tear to the last sight of my ever revered benefactor? It will oblige me beyond expression." How noble! How infinitely touching! Robert Burns, a man of the loftiest genius, stealing among the crowd, to pay a tear to the memory of his benefactor! It is the tribute of the heart that conceived this magnificent utterance of generosity:—"What, my dear Cunningham, is there in riches, that they narrow and burden the heart so? I think, that were I as rich as the sun, I should be as generous as the day." It is no mean tribute to have shed on one's grave a tear from the heart of a man that gave utterance to so grand a conception of generosity. Such a conception is evidence of the lofty

magnificence of the soul of Burns, and throws the highest moral lustre over his tribute of sorrow for the Earl of Glencairn. But after his great heart had poured its silent tear on the grave of his benefactor, and his spirit had revived, he poured forth all the meaning of that tear in immortal verse :—

" The bridegroom may forget the bride,
Was made his wedded wife yestreen ;
The monarch may forget the crown,
That on his head an hour has been ;
The mother may forget the child,
That smiles sae sweetly on her knee ;
But I'll remember thee, Glencairn,
And a' that thou hast done for me !"

Here, genius, in the exercise of its high prerogative, has rendered back to its patron an immortality of gratitude that will stand for ever in the domain of literature as a monument of the noble generosity that assists humble merit. Let wealth ponder on this noble lesson, and learn its true dignity! The honours conferred by genius are more enduring than those conferred by

kings. Glencairn's patents of nobility are poor in honour, when compared with the verse of Burns.

At this time, there was not a man in Scotland who would not have felt himself honoured at having Burns as his guest. And he was visited by all ranks. The great Glasgow road ran near his residence, and he was literally consumed in both his time and his substance by those who called to pay their respects to genius. Sir Egerton Brydges, speaking of his visit, says:—"I never conversed with a man who appeared to be more warmly impressed with the beauties of nature; and visions of female beauty seemed to transport him. He did not merely appear to be a poet at casual intervals; but at every moment a poetical enthusiasm seemed to beat in his veins, and he lived all his days the inward, if not the outward, life of a poet. I thought I perceived in Burns's cheek the symptoms of an energy which had been pushed too far; and he had this feeling himself. Every now and then, he spoke of the grave as

soon about to close over him. His dark eye had at first a character of sternness; but, as he became warmed, though this did not entirely melt away, it was mingled with changes of extreme softness." The blight of disappointed ambition, and the wear and tear of a brave spirit most tenderly sensitive, were beginning to be seen in the person of Burns; and what was worst of all, to be felt in his heart. And the trials of life were thickening. The future was darker than the past. His salary had this year, 1791, been raised to seventy pounds; but his farm had proved ruinous to him. He had sunk more than half of the proceeds of his poems. He determined, therefore, to give up the farm, and remove to Dumfries, and endeavour to live on the salary of seventy pounds. From this moment, his star begins to descend rapidly towards the horizon. Of all men he was the least fitted to be a subordinate official in political station. He was now wholly dependent on political favour. We will see the result.

Having sold his farming utensils and his stock, and paid his landlord the rent, and a small sum for dilapidations, he moved to Dumfries with his humble furniture, into a small house in a neighbourhood which suited his fancy. Seventy pounds a year to a man of his fame, which necessitated him to visits from the great, to an extensive correspondence, to a considerable outlay for books and other expenditures, besides the support of his family, could not prevent visions of poverty from haunting the fancy of the dullest man.

Soon after Burns went to Dumfries, he was written to by George Thomson of Edinburgh, to compose songs for a work he was about to publish. Thomson from his boyhood, had a passion for music and painting; and had now conceived the idea of collecting all the best Scottish melodies and songs, and of obtaining accompaniments to them, worthy of their merit. The Scottish melodies were generally without symphonies to introduce and conclude them; and the accompaniments

very poor; and the songs connected with them, being the productions of a rude age, were often coarse, vulgar, and indelicate. Thomson had procured the services of Pleyel, Beethhoven, Weber, and Hummell, the first musicians at that time in Europe, to compose accompaniments to the airs, and syphonies to introduce and conclude them, all adapted to the piano-forte, violin, flute, and violincello. Their work has been pronounced unrivalled for originality and beauty. The next thing was to procure the services of some one to compose the songs. "Fortunately," says Thomson, "for the melodies, I turned my eyes to Robert Burns, who no sooner was informed of my plan and wishes, than with all the frankness, generosity, and enthusiasm which marked his character, he undertook to write whatever songs I wanted for my work: but in answer to my promise of remuneration, he declared, in the most emphatic terms, that he would receive nothing of the kind! He proceeded with the utmost alacrity to execute

what he had undertaken, and from the year 1792 to the time of his death, in 1796, I continued to receive his exquisitely beautiful compositions for the melodies I had sent him from time to time; and in order that nothing should be wanting, which might suit my work, he empowered me to make use of all the other songs he had written for Johnson's Musical Museum. My work thus contains above one hundred and twenty of his inimitable songs." Burns in his letter in answer to Thomson's request, says:—"I have just this moment got your letter. As the request you make to me will positively add to my enjoyments in complying with it, I shall enter into your undertaking with all the small portion of abilities I have, strained to the utmost exertion, by the impulse of enthusiasm. As to any remuneration, you may think my songs either above or below price; for they shall absolutely be one or the other. With the honest enthusiasm with which I embark in your undertaking, to talk of money,

wages, fee, hire, &c., would be downright prostitution of soul."

After Burns had been contributing songs for nearly a year, Thomson sent him the first books of the songs, which had just been published, and by way of remuneration, sent also, a five pound note, with a promise of more. Burns thus acknowledges it :—"I assure you, my dear sir, that you truly hurt me with your pecuniary parcel. It degrades me in my own eyes. However, to return it, would savor of affectation; but as to any more traffic of that debtor and creditor kind, I swear, by that Honour, which crowns the upright statue of Robert Burns's integrity,—on the least motion of it, I will indignantly spurn the by-past transaction, and from that moment commence entire stranger to you!" This is a tone not to be misunderstood, Burns in the nobleness of his soul, had entered into the project from generosity, and by that impulse alone would he carry through his work. I love the man. My soul magnifies itself, in sympathy with his noble

nature. He had undertaken to do an act of generosity, and he spurned the idea of being paid for it.

"Awa ye selfish war'ly race,
Wha think that havins, sense, and grace,
Ev'n love an' friendship, should give place
To catch-the-plack!
I dinna like to see your face,
Nor hear your crack.

But ye whom social pleasure charms,
Whose hearts the tide of kindness warms,
Who hold your being on the terms,
Each aid the others,
Come to my bowl, come to my arms,
My friends, my brothers!"

In the letters of Burns to Thomson, accompanying the songs, there is a good deal of fine criticism. What Burns had undertaken, was a task of extraordinary difficulty: to write words to such a variety of airs. "There is (says Burns) a peculiar rhythmus in many of our airs, and a necessity of adapting syllables to the emphasis, or what I would call the feature-notes of the tune, that cramps the poet, and lays him

under almost insuperable difficulties." In another letter he tells how he overcame these difficulties. "Until I am complete master of a tune, in my own singing, (such as it is,) I can never compose for it. My way is: I consider the poetic sentiment correspondent to my idea of the musical expression; then choose my theme; begin a stanza—when that is composed, which is generally the most difficult part of the business, I walk out, sit down now and then, look out for objects in nature round me, that are in unison or harmony with the cogitations of my fancy, and workings of my bosom; humming every now and then the air, with the verses I have framed. When I feel my muse beginning to jade, I retire to the solitary fireside of my study, and then commit my effusions to paper; swinging at intervals on the hind-legs of my elbow-chair, by way of calling forth my own critical strictures, as my pen goes on. Seriously! this at home, is almost invariably my way."

Any one, of the least knowledge of the art of composition, must see at once, the extreme difficulty of writing verses, containing not only a rhythm, but sentiments also, suitable to such a variety of measures. But nothing in the art of versification was beyond the genius of Burns. He was one of its greatest masters. And he has given us here the very plan by which he caught the sentiment of the musical expression, and then embodying it in words, wove it in with the tune. Dr. Walcot, who had promised Thomson to write songs for his works, complained to Thomson, of the difficulty of composing verses suitable to some of the airs. Thomson tells Burns of it in one of his letters,—"That eccentric bard Peter Pindar, has stated, I know not how many difficulties about writing for the airs I sent him, because of the peculiarity of their measures, and the trammels they impose on his flying Pagasus. I subjoin for your perusal, the only one I have yet got from him, being for the fine

air, 'Lord Gregory.'" And this was the only one he ever did get from Walcot. The difficulties were too much for him.

In this correspondence Burns has thrown a good deal of light upon the true theory of art, as I have endeavoured to exhibit it in my criticism on the poetry of Burns. In speaking of the song, "The Banks of the Dee," he says, "The song is well enough, but has some false imagery in it, for instance,—

'And sweetly the nightingale sung from the *tree*.'

In the first place, the nightingale sings from a low bush, but never from a tree; and in the second place, there never was a nightingale seen or heard on the banks of the Dee, or on the banks of any other river in Scotland. Exotic rural imagery is always comparatively flat." Here Burns enunciates by example, the great fundamental principle of art: *conformity to truth, or the faithful statement of facts in nature.* It is just as absurd to divorce art from nature, as it is to divorce philo-

sophy from nature. In art, truth and beauty are inseparably allied. Just in proportion as the artist deviates from nature, just so far is his work false, and defective in beauty. The highest beauty is only compatible with the highest truth. And in exact proportion as our knowledge of nature increases, must the truthfulness of art increase. As the sciences advance, art must be informed of their truths in order to conform its productions to them, else they will disgust the intelligent with their ignorant incongruities. Burns had a clear conception of the truth that art must conform to nature; and he not only exemplifies it in his poetry, but he insists upon it throughout his correspondence with Thomson. 'One hint let me give you—whatever Mr. Pleyel does, let him (says Burns) not alter an iota of the original Scottish airs; I mean in the song department; but let our national music preserve its native features. They are, I own, frequently wild, and irreducible to the modern rules; but on that very eccen-

tricity, perhaps, depends a great part of their effect." Burns considered these airs the true musical expression of nature's instincts, untaught and untrammelled by artificial rules, and therefore in truth the highest art. And besides, it was purely a national work of Scottish music and song, that they were endeavouring to build up, and he determined that its true character should be preserved. Therefore, in his very first letter to Thomson he says,—"If you are for English verses, there is, on my part, an end of the matter. Whether in the simplicity of the ballad or the pathos of the song, I can only hope to please myself in being allowed at least a sprinkling of our native tongue." In another letter, he says:—"There is a *naivete*, a pastoral simplicity in a slight intermixture of Scots words and phraseology which is more in unison, (at least to my taste, and I will add, to every Caledonian taste,) with the simple pathos, or rustic sprightliness of our native music, than any English verses whatever. So severe was Burns in his notions of con-

formity of art to nature, or truth, that he intended to revise his songs, and change all the foreign names for native ones, and rely on the Marys, the Jeans, and other native names, to influence the hearts of Scotsmen. "In my by-past songs, (says he,) I dislike one thing, the name Chloris. I meant it as the fictitious name of a certain lady; but on second thoughts, it is a high incongruity to have a Greek appellation to a Scottish pastoral ballad."

Besides contributing so many songs, Burns agreed to write an appendix of anecdotes about the songs, to an Essay on Scotch music which Dr. Beattie had promised as an introduction to Thomson's work. "I mean (says he) to draw up an appendix to the doctor's essay, containing my stock of anecdotes, &c., of our Scots songs. All the late Mr. Tytler's anecdotes I have by me, taken down in the course of my acquaintance with him, from his own mouth. I am such an enthusiast, that in the course of my several peregrinations through Scotland, I made a pilgrim-

age to the individual spot from which every song took its rise, "Lochabar," and the "Braes of Ballenden," excepted. So far as the locality, either from the title of the air, or the tenor of the song, could be ascertained, I have paid my devotions at the particular shrine of every Scots muse."

All this appears rather the work of a scholar of literary ease, than of an exciseman riding two hundred miles a week in search of smugglers, and others defrauding the excise. "The labours of the excise (says Cunningham) now and then led him along a barren line of sea-coast, extending from Caerlaverock Castle, where the Maxwells dwelt of old, to Annan Water. This district fronts the coast of England; and from its vicinity to the Isle of Man, was in those days infested with daring smugglers, who poured in brandy, Holland gin, tea, tobacco, and salt in vast quantities. Small farmers and persons engaged in inland traffic, diffused the commodities through the villages; they were

generally vigorous and daring fellows, in whose hearts a gauger or two bred no dismay. They were well mounted, acquainted with the use of a cutlass, an oak sapling, or a whip loaded with lead; and and when mounted between a couple of brandy-kegs, and their horses' heads turned to the hills, not one exciseman in ten dared to stop them. To prevent the disembarkation of run-goods, when a smuggling craft made its appearance, was a duty to which the poet was liable to be called; and many a darksome hour he was compelled to keep watch, that the peasantry might not have the pleasure of drinking tea and brandy duty free." Such was the official avocation of Burns; and frequently by night, as well as by day, was he galloping along the sands of Solway in search of smugglers. And it was sometimes in these rides, and sometimes at some place where he put up for the night, that he composed his songs. He thus writes to Thomson:—You cannot have any idea of the predica-

ment in which I write to you. In the course of my duty as superior, (in which capacity I have acted of late,) I came here yesternight, to this unfortunate, wicked little village. I have gone forward, but snows of ten feet deep have impeded my progress: I have tried to 'gae back the gate I cam again,' but the same obstacle has shut me up within insuperable bars. To add to my misfortune, since dinner, a scraper has been torturing cat-gut, in sounds that would have insulted the dying agonies of a sow under the hands of a butcher, and thinks himself, on that very account, exceeding good company." This, surely, was a fine condition for poetic inspiration. Yet, amid such turmoil, Burns was still a poet.

We come now to what, to me, is the most painful incident in the life of Burns. A new era had opened in the civilization of Europe. The spirit of progress had overthrown the monarchy of France, and was everywhere scrutinizing the rightfulness and utility of monarchical institutions.

This made governments extremely jealous. They gave a willing ear to every spy who, with serpentine stealthiness and treachery, would steal into the confidential privacies of society, and catch hasty expressions, and exaggerating them into incipient treason, report them to government, often for no better reward than the being permitted to approach, though in servile crouching, near to the pomp of office. One of these creatures, or perhaps some fellow who had, for some act of puppyism, felt the lash of Burn's sarcasm, whispered into the ear of authority, that Burns was disaffected to government. The Commissioners of Excise accordingly gave an order for inquiry into his conduct At this time, his health was delicate from the toilsome labours of his life, from recent pecuniary losses, from the incessant activity of his mind, and the gloomy future that was blackening over his path. No man, too, ever prided himself more upon the independence of his character. He was even extravagant in this sentiment. It may well then be imagined

how his proud and deeply sensitive heart recoiled at succumbing to the inquisition of the minions of authority, who, as men, were hardly fit to tie the latchets of his shoes. In the first impulse of indignation, restrained by the fear for the helplessness of his family, he wrote the following letter to his friend Graham of Fintry, who was one of the Commissioners:—"I have been surprised, confounded, distracted, by Mr. Mitchell the collector, telling me that he has received an order from your Board, to inquire into my political conduct, and blaming me as a person disaffected to government.

"Sir, you are a husband and a father. You know what you would feel to see the much-loved wife of your bosom, and your helpless, prattling little ones turned adrift into the world, degraded and disgraced from a situation in which they had been respectable and respected, and left almost without the necessary support of a miserable existence. Alas! sir, must I think that such soon will be my lot? and from

the d——d, dark insinuations of hellish, groundless envy too! I believe, sir, I may aver it, and in the sight of Omniscience, that I would not tell a deliberate falsehood, no, not though even worse horrors, if worse can be, than those I have mentioned, hung over my head; and I say that the allegation, whatever villain has made it, is a lie! To the British constitution, on revolution principles, next after my God, I am most devoutly attached. You sir, have been much and generously my friend; Heaven knows how warmly I have felt the obligation, and how gratefully I have thanked you. Fortune, sir, has made you powerful and me impotent; has given you patronage and me dependence. I would not, for my single self, call on your humanity; were such my insular, unconnected situation, I would despise the tear that now swells in my eye—I could brave misfortune, I could face ruin; for at the worst 'Death's thousand doors stand open;' but good God! the tender concerns that I have mentioned, the claims and ties that I

see at this moment, and feel around me, how they unnerve courage and wither resolution! To your patronage, as a man of some genius, you have allowed me a claim; and your esteem, as an honest man, I know is my due. To these, sir, permit me to appeal; by these may I adjure you to save me from that misery which threatens to overwhelm me, and which, with my latest breath I will say it, I have not deserved."

Thus, in the private ear of friendship, did Burns mingle the tenderness of his domestic sympathies with the fiery indignation of his insulted feelings. But in his official communication to the Board, which his friend Graham laid before them, he stood upon a flat denial of the accusations; but with the boldness of a manly heart, he said, if he must speak out, that there was corruption in the government. "In my defence (says Burns) to their accusations, I said that whatever might be my sentiments of republics, ancient or modern, as to Britain, I abjured the idea. That a constitution

which in its original principles experience had proved to be in every way fitted for our happiness in society, it would be insanity to sacrifice to an untried visionary theory. That in consideration of my being situated in a department, however humble, immediately in the hands of people of power, I had forborne taking an active part, either personally or as an author, in the present business of reform. But that where I must declare my sentiments, I would say there existed a system of corruption between the executive power and the representative part of the legislature, which boded no good to our glorious constitution, and which every patriotic Briton must wish to see amended." This bold charge of corruption against the government gave great offence, and Burns would have been dismissed but for his friend Graham, who restrained the Board from his removal. The Board, however, directed that he be informed, "That his business was *to act, not to think;* and that whatever

might be men or measures, it was for him to be *silent* and *obedient.*"

I cannot find words scornful enough to express my contempt for those little vulgar officials, who could with such swinish indifference trample upon the great sensitive heart of Robert Burns. He *not to think!* A man gifted with the very largest capacity of thought. He to be *silent* and *obedient!* A man endowed with the most divine power of speech of any Briton of the age; and with a spirit of freedom and bravery that makes him an example which sheds lustre on the very name of man. He to be a mere official menial! whose endowments were such as to make him "a stronger proof of the immortality of the soul than any that philosophy ever produced." His country and the world have scorned the drivelling idiocy of the command. "Does any man (says Burns) tell me that my feeble efforts can be of no service; and that it does not belong to my humble station to meddle with the concerns of a nation? I can

tell him, that it is on such individuals as I that a nation has to rest, both for the hand of support and the eye of intelligence. The uninformed *mob* may swell a nation's bulk, and the titled, tinsel, courtly throng may be its feathered ornament; but the number of those who are elevated enough in life to reason and to reflect, yet low enough to keep clear of the venal contagion of a court—these are a nation's strength!" Thus did Burns defend, with manly independence, both his person and his position.

This transaction affected Burns deeply, and has been thought by some to have hastened his steps to a premature grave. He felt now that all hope of promotion in office was gone. "All men's eyes (says Lockhart) were upon Burns. He was the standing marvel of the place; his toasts, his jokes, his epigrams, his songs, were the daily food of conversation and scandal; and he, open and careless, and thinking many of his superiors had not the least objection to hear and to applaud, soon

began to be considered, among the local admirers and disciples of the good king and his great minister, as the most dangerous of all the apostles of sedition, and to be shunned accordingly." All who had any hope of office shunned him. And the aristocracy of the district treated him with marked coldness; and Dumfries being a hive of toryism, he was cut off from much social sympathy. If, at this time, his position had been such as to enable him to have gratified his oft expressed desire for a place in the House of Commons, the world would now know the unuttered thunders of speech that then burnt in the great furnace of Burns's heart. For I agree with Carlyle, that he had the faculties of a Mirabeau. What might we not expect from those great conversational powers, when exerted in parliamentary declamation and harangue? How would

> "Tropes, metaphors, and figures pour
> Like Hecla streaming thunder."

At this time, too, there was an under-

current of detraction against Burns's moral character, flowing secretly through society, and added to every day by the venom spite from some heart where it had been rankling in the chambers of cowardice. He was represented as given up to hard drink. Now, if there be any one thing in which the firmness of Burns will be remarkably displayed, it was the success with which he escaped drunkenness. At that time, Scotland was one of the hardest-drinking countries in the world. All classes drank freely; and the gentlemen and nobility were addicted to great excesses. "The fact is (says Hogg), those who accuse Burns of drunkenness, know nothing about the history of drunkenness in Scotland at all. Let them look at the character of the Baron of Bradwardine in one age, and of Hugh Jenks in another, by Sir Walter Scott, and they will find the epitome of drinking in those days drawn to the life. About the beginning of the last century and for some time previous, drinking among the no-

bility, and first-rate gentry of Scotland, was carried to a very great height." Burns was exposed in a pre-eminent degree to the contagion of this practice, from the time, at the age of nineteen, "he learned to fill his glass, and to mix without fear in a drunken squabble" with the smugglers near the school where he then was, up to the day of his death. He was the greatest of all convivial companions. His broad humour, his brilliant wit, his electric flashes of repartee, his lofty eloquence, his daring imaginings, his facetious fancies, his impromptu catches of poetry, his memory filled with newly-composed songs, suited to any occasion, made him altogether incomparable as a convivialist. He was sought after by all classes. In the country, in the towns, at Edinburgh, everybody was anxious to have at their feasts the man whose common conversation made ostlers and waiters at inns get out of bed to hear it, made philosophers and the literati gather around him in amazement,

and carried jewelled Duchesses off their feet. And he, with a heart "as rich as the sun and as generous as the day," could not but be glad to exert powers which must have afforded him as much pleasure, as they gave delight to his enthralled auditors. All who have any soul, know how delightful is the exercise of our intellectual and emotional faculties, when rapt to their highest pitch, by the sympathy caught from the emotions of those whom we are lifting from the dulness of common feelings into the enthusiasm of the lofty sentiment of generous sympathy. Burns possessed all this in a super-eminent degree. And it was impossible for a man of his peculiar endowments to keep out of the magic circle of social entertainment where all were, with glad hearts and bright countenances, enthusiatically welcoming him, as the guest of guests. He was all his life, as his letters show, complaining of "this savage hospitality which knocks a man down with liquor," to use his own language. At the very time of which I

am now writing, in a letter to Mrs. Dunlop, he says:—"Occasional hard drinking is the devil to me. Against this, I have again and again bent my resolution, and have greatly succeeded. Taverns I have totally abandoned: it is the private parties in the family way, among the hard-drinking gentlemen of this country, that do me the mischief—but even this I have more than half given over."

But Findlater, a gentleman connected with the excise, has long since disarmed history of the falsehood which I am combating. "My connection (says he) with Burns, commenced immediately after his admission to the excise, and continued to the hour of his death. In all that time, the superintendence of his behaviour, as an officer of the revenue, was a branch of my especial province, and I was not an inattentive observer of the general conduct of a man and a poet so celebrated by his countrymen. He was exemplary in his attention, and was even jealous of the imputation on his negligence. It was

not till near the latter end of his days, that there was any falling off in this respect, and this was well accounted for by the pressure of disease and accumulating infirmities. I will farther avow, that I never saw him,—which was very frequently while at Ellisland, and still more so, almost every day after he removed to Dumfries,—in hours of business, but he was quite himself, and capable of discharging the duties of his office; nor was he ever known to drink by himself, or seen to indulge in liquor in a forenoon. I have seen Burns in all his various phases,—in his convivial moments, in his sober moods, and in the bosom of his family. Indeed, I believe I saw more of him, than any other individual had occasion to see, and I never beheld any thing like the gross enormities with which he has been charged. That when he sat down in the evening with friends whom he liked, he was apt to prolong the social hours beyond the bounds which prudence would dictate, is unquestionable:

but in his family, I will venture to say, he was never seen otherwise than as attentive and affectionate in a high degree." And Gray, a gentleman of education, who was then teacher in Dumfries, says:—"It came under my own view professionally, that Burns superintended the education of his children with a degree of care that I have never seen surpassed. In the bosom of his family he spent many an hour, directing the studies of his eldest son, a boy of uncommon talents. I have frequently found him explaining to this youth, then not more than nine years of age, the poets from Shakspeare to Gray, or storing his mind with examples of heroic virtue, as they live in the pages of the English historian. I could ask any person of common candour, if employments like these are consistent with habitual drunkenness?" But there are facts which are even stronger than these testimonies. During this time, besides his labours and his care of his children's education, he was writing songs for both

the works before mentioned, and was also correcting a new edition of his poems. In a letter to James Johnson, dated in the time I am considering, he says:—"You should have heard from me long ago: but over and above some vexatious share in the pecuniary losses of these accursed times, I have all this winter been plagued with low spirits and blue devils, so that I have almost hung my harp on the willows. . .

"I am just now busy correcting a new edition of my poems, and this, with my ordinary business, finds me full employment.

"I send you by my friend, Mr. Wallace, forty-one songs for your fifth volume; if we cannot finish in any other way, what would you think of Scots words to some beautiful Irish airs?" Is this the occupation of a drunkard? Forty-one songs! sent at one time,—some original,—some doubtless only old songs remodelled. But it is almost incredible that Burns could

find time to perform so much mental labour. If he had nothing but literary leisure, one would think it a great deal to accomplish, with the constant reading he was carrying on, with a view to poetical labours of a different cast from his earlier productions.

But this mighty intellect was soon to give over its labours in this world. His failing health, his increasing family, the education of his children, the comparative neglect of the world, all were fast hurrying Burns to the grave. One of the greatest sources of consolation to his wounded spirit was now, as it had always been, correspondence with his female friends. He continued till his death to correspond with many of the most accomplished ladies of Scotland. In a letter to Clarinda, with whom he still corresponded, he says of his friend Ainslie, who made the Highland tour with him:—"I had a letter from him a while ago, but it was so dry, so distant, so like a card to one of his clients, that I could scarce bear to read it, and have not

yet answered it. He is a good honest fellow, and *can* write a friendly letter, which would do equal honour to his head and heart, as a whole sheaf of his letters which I have by me will witness; and though Fame does not blow her trumpet at my approach *now* as she did *then*, when he first honoured me with his friendship, yet I am as proud as ever; and when I am laid in the grave, I wish to be stretched out at full length, that I may occupy every inch of ground I have a right to." Thus did the proud and lofty spirit of Burns rear itself above all disaster, all neglect of the world, and in the loftiness of his conceptions make all feel the grandeur of his nature. But strong as he always was in hope, he clearly saw that the bow of promise was growing fainter and fainter on the dark clouds of the future. In the autumn of 1795, he lost his only daughter, which was a severe affliction to his tender heart. And he poured forth his grief in verse:—

"Oh still I behold thee, all lovely in death,
Reclin'd on the lap of thy mother,
When the tear trickled bright, when the short stifl'd breath,
Told how dear ye were aye to each other."

And soon after this sad event, his own health so rapidly declined, all began to feel that he was soon to enter on the realities of another world. In a letter, dated 26th of June, 1796, he says:—"Alas, Clarke! I begin to fear the worst. As to my individual self, I am tranquil, and would despise myself if I were not; but Burns's poor widow, and half-a-dozen of his dear little ones, helpless orphans!—there I am weak as a woman's tear. Enough of this:—'tis half of my disease!" On the 4th of July, 1796, he says, in a letter to Johnson, inquiring about the Musical Museum:—"Many a merry meeting this publication has given us, and possibly it may give us more, though alas! I fear it. This protracting, slow, consuming illness, which hangs over me, will, I doubt much, my ever dear friend, arrest my

san before he has well reached his middle career: and will turn over the poet to far more important concerns, than studying the brilliancy of wit, or the pathos of sentiment! However, hope is the cordial of the human heart, and I endeavour to cherish it as well as I can!"—Two or three days after the date of this letter, Burns went to a place on the seashore, called The Brow, to try the effect of sea-bathing. The beautiful and accomplished Mrs. Riddle was then near The Brow, for health. As soon as she heard that Burns had arrived there, she sent her carriage for him, and invited him to dine with her. "I was struck," says she, "with his appearance on entering the room; the stamp of death was upon his features. He seemed already touching the brink of eternity.—His first words were—'Well, madam, have you any commands for the other world?' I replied, that it seemed a doubtful case which of us should be there the soonest, and that I hoped he would yet live to write my epitaph. He looked into my face with

an air of great kindness, and expressed his concern at seeing me look so ill, with his usual sensibility. At table, he ate little or nothing, and he complained of having entirely lost the tone of his stomach. We had a long and serious conversation about his present state, and the approaching termination of all his earthly prospects. He spoke of his death with firmness as well as feeling, as an event likely to happen very soon, and which gave him concern, chiefly from leaving his children so young and unprotected; and his wife in the hourly expectation of giving him a fifth. He showed great concern about the care of his literary fame, and particularly the publication of his posthumous works. He said he was well aware that his death would occasion some noise, and that every scrap of his writings would be revived against him, to the injury of his future reputation; that letters and verses, written with unguarded freedom, would be handed about by vanity or malevolence, when no dread of his resentment would restrain them, nor prevent

malice or envy from pouring forth their venom to blast his fame. The conversation was kept up with great animation and earnestness on his side. I had seldom seen his mind greater, or more collected. There was frequently a great degree of vivacity in his sallies, and they would probably have had a greater share, had not the concern and dejection I could not disguise, damped the spirit of pleasantry he seemed willing to indulge. We parted about sunset, on the evening of the 5th of July: the next day I saw him again, and we parted to meet no more." How interesting are these reminiscences? The great soul, who had consecrated so many common things to immortality, by imparting to them the ideal hues of poetry,—who had raised to more than the glory of a queen, the peasant girl, whose charms had won his love,—is about to hang up his magic harp on the silent walls of his humble dwelling, never more to be touched by that hand, which had drawn from its strings, strains that, through all time, must ravish the heart of man.

And oh, if when he hung up that harp, knowing that his own ear was never again to hear its strains, he could but have known, that his wife and children would be saved from the distresses of poverty, how contented would that heart have been, which was now "as weak as a woman's tear." How willingly would he have entered upon those "far more important concerns, than studying the brilliancy of wit or the pathos of sentiment." But, alas! that country which he so dearly loved, saw her noblest and fondest son realise in the last ebbings of his heart, the sad truth,

> "Dearly bought, the hidden treasure,
> Finer feelings can bestow,
> Chords that vibrate sweetest pleasure,
> Thrill the deepest notes of woe."

Burns, in the true generosity of his heart, had when he was about to be married, loaned to his brother Gilbert half of the proceeds of his poems, and his ill success with his farm had sunk the other half. He was now dying in abject poverty. And

not only had he yearnings over the sad lot of his wife and children, but, as we have seen, his reputation, which a noble ambition had built up, was now his anxious concern. Oh, could but his country have realised its duty, how many a pang would have been spared to the heart of her greatest and tenderest son!

Burns continued at The Brow until the 16th of July, when he wrote as follows to his wife:—

"My dearest love:—I delayed writing until I could tell you what effect sea-bathing was likely to produce. It would be injustice to deny that it has eased my pains, and I think has strengthened me. My appetite is extremely bad. I will see you on Sunday.

Your affectionate husband,

Robert Burns."

Finding that he was sinking, Burns determined to hasten home, that his spirit might dwell amidst those it loved best, for

its few remaining moments of earth. On the 18th of July he reached home, so feeble that he could scarcely walk from the carriage to his house. But alas! he had come not to a home of peace, where he might repose in the smiles of her whom he loved, for the few moments he was to dwell on earth. His wife was hourly expecting to be confined; and was without a friend. In the agony of his dying heart, he wrote to his wife's father:—"Do for heaven's sake send Mrs. Armour here immediately. My wife is hourly expected to be put to bed. Good God! What a situation for her to be in, poor girl, without a friend! I returned from sea-bathing quarters to-day, and my medical friends would almost persuade me that I am better, but I think and feel that my strength is so gone, that the disorder will prove fatal to me. Your son-in-law, R. B." What a sad lot is this for him who had written the "Cotter's Saturday Night." The visions of fancy could no longer cheer the drooping spirit. The great poet lies on the bed of death;

and her whose countenance ever beamed with love for him, does not sit beside him to cheer him with her last smile. He dies alone from her bosom. On the 21st of July, 1796, in the morning, the great soul of Robert Burns saw the last of earth.

Here let us pause, and look back over the life of this remarkable man! How glorious in some respects, and how gloomy in others, are its vicissitudes! How much to praise, how much to censure: but still take him all in all, it must be admitted that Robert Burns was one of the noblest specimens of humanity. Glorious in his intellectual character, magnanimous in his moral, we praise him for his greatness, and we sympathize in his weakness. Not many men have contributed more to the happiness of their country. There are in Scotland but few firesides, where the songs of Burns are not sung every evening, diffusing through the heart, the sweetness of spiritual pleasure, and refining the sensibilities, by the purifying sympathy with generous sentiment. And his country, now

when the poet himself no longer dwells on earth, appreciates his greatness, in the power of the spell in which his poetry holds the universal Scottish heart. In continually increasing power of expression, has Scotland been speaking forth her love for Burns, from his death, to this moment. On the hills of Edinburgh, a noble monument, with a statue of the poet, by Flaxman, has been reared to his fame, by the side of monuments to Playfair and to Stewart. And in his own native Ayrshire, by the humble cot where the light of nature first shed its glo-glories upon the eyes of a boy, a monument has been built to tell how the heart of Scotland yearns over that spot. But these dumb monuments could not speak out the full heart of Scotland. The nation labouring under the burden it felt upon its heart, for the neglect it had shown its noble son, determined to speak out from its own bosom, in one voice, all that it felt. In July, 1844, on the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Burns, Scotland, as if moved by the pulsation of one heart, celebrated the

day by a grand festival at the spot where Burns was born. Streams of population poured to the spot from every corner of Scotland. The hills, the valleys, and the whole country round about, were thronged with the people hastening to the birth-place of the poet. Trains of cars after trains of cars, were linked to the groaning engines, until they almost refused to move, to hasten the people onward. And from the margin of the hills about Ayr, the panorama of the sea with the steamboats looming in the distance, told that the people were coming. And now the multitudes were assembled to eighty thousand souls. A hundred bands deafened the very heavens with a crash of music. And the multitudes, with a voice of the sea, sung "Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doon," until all the air seemed to be music. And Wilson pronounced a noble eulogy on the character of the poet. The peer, the senator, the historian, the poet, the peasant, the artisan, the great and small, the lettered and the simple of the land, had all assem-

bled, after fifty years' silence, to unite in deep and sincere homage to the genius of one humble man. And two of the sons of the poet were there, and his sister, as invited guests to the banquet of glory. And thus, on that day did Scotland speak, from the fulness of the heart, her love for Robert Burns.

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